

AA Insider

Your Guide to American Airlines

Delicious Indian Dishes on American

Recently, American Airlines spiced up its food offerings on flights between Chicago and Delhi, India. American's customers flying from Delhi to Chicago will enjoy selections that were developed in conjunction with AA's Indian catering group. Passengers traveling from Chicago to Delhi will get a menu that was specially created for American's customers by Maneet Chauhan, executive chef of the highly acclaimed Vermilion restaurant in Chicago. Vermilion, which was founded by concept creator Rohini Dey, is owned and operated by Indian women and is known for its innovative Indian-Latin cuisine. Vermilion has been recognized as Best New Restaurant by numerous national publications, including *Bon Appétit*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *USA Today*. We recently chatted with Chauhan (pictured at right) about her collaboration with American.



Designing the menu was a very rewarding experience.

What was your approach when you were developing the menu?

We wanted to create a fresh and unique menu based in the culinary heritage of India that would go beyond the predictable fare found in most Indian buffets in the United States.

How was this experience different from your work at Vermilion?

Designing the menu was challenging because we had to keep in mind that people would be eating this food 35,000 feet above the ground. It is fundamentally different from the dining experience at Vermilion. The menu needed to be designed in such a way that it is replicable — scalable in the production process while maintaining its freshness and integrity. The production and plating were skills that needed to be transferred and monitored. Unlike at Vermilion, this involves a far more collaborative effort with the airline kitchen for production, and with the flight attendants, the AA team, and their clients for tasting and selecting dishes and plating the final meals.

What dish are you most proud of?

I am very proud of all the dishes, but my personal favorites are the Shrimp Moilee, the Patrani Maachali, the Dahi Elaichi Rajma, and the Dalcha Gosht.

How was your experience working with American Airlines and designing the new menu?

On behalf of Vermilion, I'm delighted to introduce the vibrancy of Indian cuisine to American's guests. Like it is at Vermilion, Rohini's and my goal was to go beyond the stereotypical Indian fare found outside of India and expose the regional complexity of our cuisine. We're delighted that American has taken the initiative to differentiate itself through its culinary offerings.

What do you think customers will like most about the new menu?

The range of dishes and the interesting combinations of flavors and textures. The use of unusual ingredients (like anardana, made of dried pomegranate seeds) and the regional depth of the cuisine add intrigue. Every state in India has a cuisine with its own personality, and we've tried to represent the differences.

For Your Dining Pleasure ...

The new selections will rotate monthly and will include:

From Chicago to Delhi (from Maneet Chauhan)

- Patrani Maachali: coconut-mint-marinated halibut with lemon rice and Punjabi saag paneer
- Dahi Elaichi Rajma: red kidney beans simmered in a green cardamom yogurt base
- Dalcha Gosht: braised lamb with mango rice and malai kofta (paneer-and-potato croquettes)

- Shrimp Moilee: shrimp with a delicate turmeric-and-coconut sauce served with tomato-cumin rice and anardana chole (garbanzo beans with pomegranate seeds)

From Delhi to Chicago (from American's Indian catering group)

- Kalonji Aloo: diced potatoes seasoned with coriander served with a light ginger-garlic sauce, sautéed onions, and tomatoes

- Chicken Chettinad: diced chicken accented with coriander, fresh tomatoes, and garlic, and served with lemon basmati rice and carrot-and-pea poriyal
- Ka Khagina Paneer: mashed paneer cooked with coconut milk, cashew paste, and coriander, and served with saffron-dill basmati rice
- Sliced Lamb: tender lamb with peppers and shallots complemented by Creole rice and marinated asparagus tips