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Boston: Tamarind Bay's Lalla Musa Dal

Posted by [Liz Bomze](#), April 14, 2011 at 1:30 PM



Tamarind Bay's lalla musa dal. (Photograph: Elizabeth Bomze)

A couple months back I wrote a post about one of my favorite Indian dishes, Punjab Palace's take on the North Indian eggplant stunner known as [baingan bhartha](#), and promised to follow that up with a tribute to my other vegetarian go-to, the **lalla musa dal** (\$11.95) at [Tamarind Bay Coastal Kitchen](#). I'm a woman of my word.

I fell in love with this version at a press dinner that the Brookline branch of the restaurant (the original location is in Harvard Square) hosted a few years back, and not because it looked good. As food aesthetics go, the murky, rust-brown, pebbly concoction can't compare to the restaurant's other specialties like the fennel cream-sauced cauliflower dumplings or the spiced lobster tail. But famed Indian chefs like Julie Sahni don't consider this dish **"the most exquisite of all dal preparations"** for nothing, and speaking in terms of decadence, it outclasses the rest by a long shot.



A Moghul staple, dal makhani, kali dal, Butter dal or Special dal combines black gram beans or lentils (not to be confused with petite black beluga lentils), fresh ginger, onion, tomatoes, cardamom, coriander, and a touch of hot pepper and cooks for hours—all night long at Tamarind Bay—at a bare simmer until the beans are creamy but still intact. Then a portion of the beans are puréed and returned to the pan, giving the dish a thick, spoon-coating consistency. Finally, the beans are finished with a healthy ladle of cream and ungodly amounts of butter or ghee.

To describe the result as decadent would almost be an understatement—Indian cuisine authorities like Sahní note that, unlike other lentil preparations, **this dal is not everyday fare**—and its remarkably savory, smoky edge would fool (and delight) any vegetarian.

Tamarind Bay Coastal Kitchen

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