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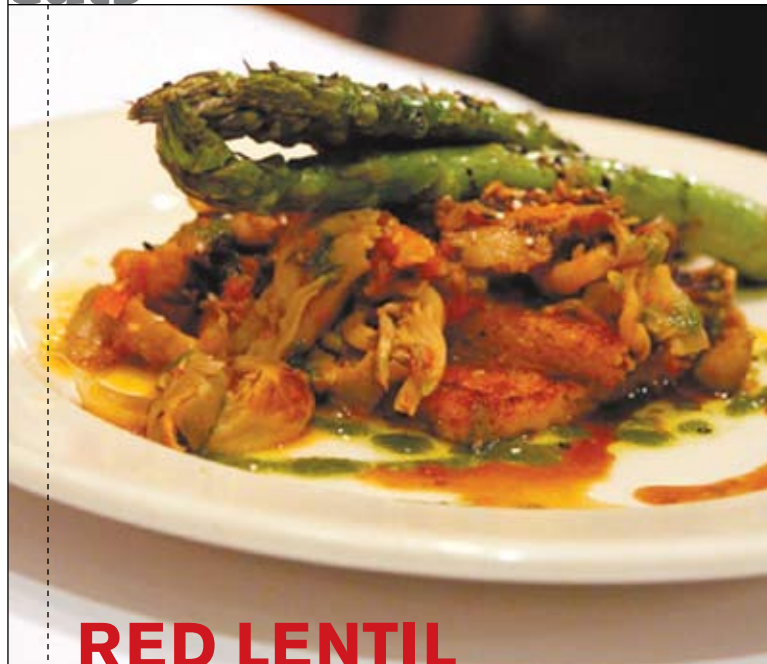
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## eats



### RED LENTIL

#### Paints you green

So, you've got your token vegan pal and this other friend who's a vegetarian and you're kind of like "whatever," but you don't eat wheat ... oh, and your boyfriend's a foodie. Where do you go for dinner?

Well, the Red Lentil in Watertown is well worth breaking Boston's city limits. This vegetarian gem will satisfy taste buds, diets and wallets alike. Painted a vibrant, Jolly Green Giant green, the dining area is bright and welcoming, smells divine and offers your choice of table or (sushi-esque) bar. Unlike some vegetarian restaurants, there is no sole cultural focus here. It's like a vegetarian world map, representing everything from Indian and Latin cuisine to American comfort food. The lot is vegetarian, and items are marked by dietary category: vegan, gluten-free, contains nuts and every combination. No booze on the menu, but get a health-high from their impressive juice bar, serving fresh-squeezed juices and smoothies.

I start with the Gobi Manchurian (vegan, gluten free, \$7.50) and the soy chicken strips (vegan, \$6.50). The Gobi (cauliflower) are breaded with chickpea flour, fried, tossed with Indian spices and coated in a sweet and spicy tomato sauce with fresh cilantro. And by fried, I mean so lightly that there is barely a trace of grease. This dish is light and flavorful, leaving me muttering, "Wow," after every bite. The friendly server, picking up on my Gobi-induced reverie, confirms this is a Red Lentil signature—not something to pass over. The chicken strips, served with a tangy barbecue sauce, also defy the word "fried." While some vegan chicken fingers resemble deep-fried, seitan rawhides, these are textured well enough to please even a carnivore, and you won't use up all your napkins on one piece.

Moving on to the larger plates, I go for the butternut squash polenta (gluten free, vegan, \$14). This green-as-the-walls asparagus-topped beauty is a mushroom-lover's dream. The polenta is grilled, topped with firm "oyster" mushroom ragout and finished with sesame asparagus drizzled with cilantro sunflower seed pesto. The mushrooms make it an earthy-flavored dish, but the pesto and polenta richen it to warm, hearty levels. Plus, the presentation will give your foodie friend something to talk about.

Finally, I order the sweet potato quesadilla (vegetarian, \$9.50). Once again, without a trace of that shiny, make-you-feel-bad residue, this crisp and plump quesadilla is a 10. The roasted sweet potatoes, plum tomatoes, grilled asparagus and spinach packed into this 'dilla are cooked to perfect levels of tenderness. The fresh tomato salsa is the ideal compliment, and after I realize that everything on the menu is super fresh and house made (sauces, sides, vegan desserts, you name it), I wonder if it's too late to ask for some guacamole (\$2).

This place knows fresh food, flavor and hospitality. It just so happens that it's veggie-vegan-gluten-free friendly. You'll have plenty to talk about on the ride back into the city (and come on, it's not really that far). ☒

Rating:  
★★★★★

★★★★★  
*I'm a level-five  
vegan now*

★★★★★  
*I've seen the light,  
and it's vegetarian*

★★★  
*Meat who?*

★★★  
*It ain't easy being green*

★  
*Vegetables are just  
large clumps of dirt*



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