

# Restaurant review: A Caribbean treat but watch the spice

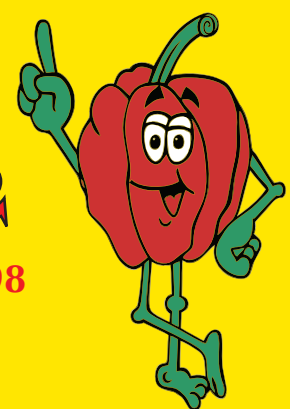
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By Amy Kenny

**D Hot Shoppe**

4155 Fairview Street, Burlington L7L 2A4 905.631.8698



The website says to call ahead for take-out and that's exactly what the guy ahead of us did. Technically, he followed the rules, but calling in \$300 worth of roti half an hour before closing throws a bit of a wrench into things.

Not that you would know from the way the staff at D Hot Shoppe handled the order. Owner Simone Lou-Hing rolled roti shells as fast as the requests came in while a cashier expertly alternated between taking orders and making them.

When the monster meal was finally wrapped up, Lou-Hing threw a huge smile to the half dozen people in line. "Slap him on the way out," she said. "He's the reason you all have to wait!" Everyone laughed, which is part of the charm of D Hot Shoppe.

It's friendly and familiar, even on your first visit.

The Caribbean joint in a strip mall off Fairview Street does a lot of take-out, and has seating at tables with a kind of disco ball finish. Walls are painted cheery shades of red, blue, yellow and orange with paintings and photos of island scenes. A TV shows images of customers enjoying the food.

The menu includes curries, roti, jerk and appetizers and, judging by the number of customers who receive first-name treatment, the food has earned loyal regulars. "Phalourie?" my partner read from the overhead menu, stressing the F sound. "What's that?" Someone beside us in line said: "It's po-lor-ree," The fritter is a fried appetizer made from split pea flour. "Don't pronounce the PH. You'll be in trouble."

We went with his advice and the phalourie was excellent. The appetizer looks like unsugared versions of the Tiny Tim donuts you find at the Ex, but they taste like savoury clouds. Light, fluffy and delicious dipped in chutney.

The potatoes in the roti were large and tender and the roti was as fresh as it comes – we saw it made from scratch. The goat curry was tender and served with a good portion of potatoes and rice drizzled with a tasty gravy.

A note on spice levels. My partner opted for a touch, the second level on D's six-step pepper spice scale. He said it wasn't quite mouth-burning but as close to hot as he could handle. I felt the same about the medium spice on my cuttlefish curry. Don't be a hero. Assume the cartoon depictions accompanying the scale are accurate. For reference, medium shows a surprised diner putting a hand to his mouth; suicide is a man with flames shooting from his rear. Whatever level you do go for, try a Ting to drink. It may sound weird to wax pairings, but the tart-sweet carbonated grapefruit juice is the perfect complement to the spice of a jerk chicken or curried dish. I have nothing but good things to say about D Hot Shoppe.

The food is great, the value for money is excellent, and they navigate a dinner rush with charm and efficiency.

## D Hot Shoppe

4155 Fairview St., Burlington  
905-631-8698  
dhotshoppe.com

**The look:** Bright casual corner

**The feel:** Fast friendly food that doesn't taste fast

**Hours:** Tuesday to Thursday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Friday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

closed Sunday and Monday.

**What you'll pay:** Small goat roti, \$6.64; large potato roti, \$6.19; small goat curry, \$10.25; small cuttlefish curry, \$10.62; phalourie, \$2.50. (tax extra)

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