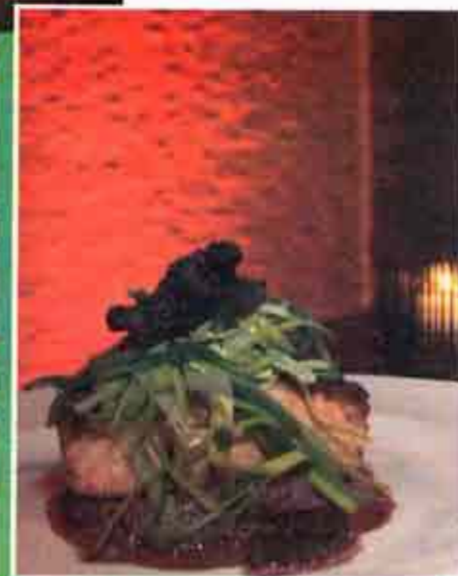


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Photos/Greg Pallante

## Chakra

channels meditative environs with upscale fare

By Amy Kuperinsky

First walk in Chakra and, once you adjust your eyes to the dim candlelit cast of the restaurant, you might just say "wow."

Muted spotlights throw shadows on antique brick and bodhisattva-like sculpture. Forget vinyl booths;

you can sit on pillows at plush couch-ringed tables ensconced in gauzy silk drapes.

How did something like this happen on Route 4? Well, the place's tagline is, "embark on a culinary journey." We embarked all right and minutes into our visit my friend phoned an acquaintance with a description of the ambiance as if on some sort of mini-vacation. Her friend had belittled our highway-laced town before, so now she just had to proudly tell (gloat to) him that yes, this was in Paramus. Take that!

From its mostly nondescript exterior, unless you've heard of the intricately designed ambiance (or visited the establishment's Web site), you'll be pretty surprised to find such a pretty, classy place inside. It looks so organic in an Eastern meditation kind of way that it could probably serve as a model of feng shui.

And you'll find it's all about presentation here. While the fare is general gourmet, the restaurant's name is all concept, pulled from the Indian yoga term that refers to "vortices of energy" within people, seven



chakras comprising a whole that connects spiritual, emotional, physical and mental well being.

But all that energy doesn't come cheap: be prepared for fairly upscale prices. "Small plates" cost \$8 to \$16, salads fall between \$7 and \$9, pastas are \$10 to \$22 and large dishes cost \$18 to \$38. Desserts prepared by a pastry chef come in at \$6 to \$12.

Before we ordered, we each received a light, tangy cracker concoction (which we ate even though we couldn't exactly distinguish what was on it in a dim milieu apparently just a lil' too hip for our eyes) that provided a nice antidote to the usual bread fare (though they had that, too).

For entrees we chose Crispy-Skin Atlantic Salmon (\$24) with morels, braised leeks and red wine risotto and Paparadelle (\$18) with broccoli

rabe. The salmon, mounted in the vertical way that makes you know you're dining fine, was gone pretty fast. The pasta was served in a generous, take-home worthy portion with tender mushrooms.

The plum-toned risotto puzzled my friend who didn't know what she was eating but happily downed it nonetheless. It looked like the texture of risotto to me, but the artsy darkness was a bit of a block to making a definitive I.D. since the red wine color made it resemble cabbage. While a later look at the menu confirmed the prior, it's not like we were going to break out a key chain flashlight in such a high-style place. This is the same reason we speculated, with reason, that if you wanted to impress someone (my friend fancied it would be a lovely, grownup way to celebrate the big 24), you'd do well to plan a visit to Chakra.

### X Chakra

**Where:**  
W. 144 Route 4 East  
Paramus

**Park it:**  
In the restaurant's lot out back, also equipped with valet, though we just parked it ourselves.

**Numbers:**  
(201) 556-1530. Open for lunch 11:30 to 2 p.m. Mon. through Fri.; open for dinner 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Mon. through Wed.; 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Thurs. through Sun.

**TheirSpace:** chakrarestaurant.com