DINING

Indian Fusion

ONCE UPON A TIME, fusion restaurants meant a blend of French and Chinese cuisines. Today it could be almost anything, from Wolfgang Puck's still-crowded Chinois on Main in Santa Monica, Calif., to a chain of Hawaiian eateries called Roy's. So what's next? Indian and you name it.

As the number of South Asians in the U.S. rises and Americans tire of yesterday's food craze, restaurants that combine Indian spices with dishes from other lands are as hot as curry. To see what the buzz is all about, check out Chicago's Vermilion, a pairing of Indian and Latin American cuisines. The chef's favorite: barbecued ribs rubbed with garam masala, braised in Coke or Pepsi, brushed with tamarind paste, and served with yucca shoestring fries and sweet-corn salsa.

New York has a couple of spots in this category, too: Taj (Indian/American) and Raga (Indian/French). Elsewhere there's Mantra in Boston, Tallula in San Francisco (both Indian/French), and Masala Wok in Richardson, Tex. (Indian/Chinese). They don't call America a melting pot for nothing.

-Michael Arndt