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Innovative Uzbek Cuisine at Oxus

Plov, lagman and manti by those in the know

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Oxus prides itself on its authentic recipes, Uzbek chef, and produce sourced from Central Asia. **OXUS / FACEBOOK**

Located in a two-story mansion right next to an Armenian church in the Maryina Roshcha neighborhood, Oxus presents an alternative take on Central Asian cuisine, distinctly different from ubiquitous chains like Chaikhona #1.

The first floor has a more ethnic feel. There is a circular tapchan, a traditional Central Asian bench for drinking tea, right in the center of the room, complete with plenty of pillows. The second floor, on the other hand, features potted olive trees and several private rooms. On the first floor you are allowed to smoke shisha, while the second floor is strictly non-smoking.

Oxus is the historical Latin name for Amu Darya, the major Asian river that crosses Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Oxus owners claim that they try to

source as much produce as possible from these countries. Oxus's chef is Bakhodir Nurmukhamedov from Uzbekistan, who is known for his work at some of the best Tashkent restaurants, including L'Art de la Cuisine and Golubiye Kupola (Blue Domes). Thanks to him, the focus at Oxus is really on Uzbek cuisine.

First, try one of the cold starters, for example, naryn — thin slices of boiled horse meat and noodles served with a piece of horse sausage — or lamb with archa, Uzbek juniper, cooked in a traditional tandyr clay oven (470 rubles).

The hot starters include the more familiar samsa, a version of samosa, a small triangular pastry with lamb (160 rubles each) or mini-chebureki, deep-fried pastries with various fillings (360 rubles for three). You can also get shurpa here, a clear soup with lamb and vegetables (520 rubles).

For your main dish, go for the Samarkand plov. The word means pilaf and consists of rice simmered in meat stock with herbs and spices in a large cooking pot (690 rubles). Oxus's version includes raisins, chickpeas and yellow carrot. Lagman is another typical Central Asian dish of handpulled noodles, served either with or without broth. At Oxus you get the Uyghur version served with lamb and sweet peppers (620 rubles). If you are feeling celebratory, there's a list of special cocktails to round it all off, including "Persimmon," a gin drink made with fruit and served in a hollowed out, frozen persimmon.

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