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## FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Shita Yenenh serves up Ethiopian dishes with  
*injera* bread.  
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

## Bread winner

### Zagol Ethiopian Restaurant introduced

East African cuisine to Reno in 2009, at its location on East Fourth Street. Its new digs are at Mira Loma Drive and McCarran Boulevard. Chef and owner Shita Yenenh greets guests and prepares every dish herself. If things get busy, you might have to wait a bit—but your patience will be rewarded.

The consumption of coffee likely originated in Ethiopia. When I called to make a reservation and inquire about the “coffee ceremony,” the chef apologized and said she’d require more notice to prepare costuming, accoutrements and assistance for that. But she did roast, grind and brew a most exquisite example for us.

Although flatware is available, Ethiopian sautées and thick stews are meant to be consumed with *injera*, a spongy flatbread with a lightly sweet and tangy sourdough flavor. It’s made of *teff*, the smallest and possibly oldest cultivated grain. Dollops of food are served on large *injera* pancakes, with strips of flatbread provided to scoop up the delicious goo. Though not keto-friendly, it’s perfectly safe for your gluten-free friends. Word to the wise, Ethiopian can make for slightly messy eating. If you avoid wings and ribs for a first date, this is on par.

We started with *gebeta*—a large, circular serving dish adorned with *injera*—topped with a combination of meat and veggie dishes (\$47). *Alicha* was a beef stew, flavored with onion, ginger, garlic, herbed butter and traditional Ethiopian spices. *Ye Siga Tibs* was lean beef sautéed in olive oil, with onion, jalapeño, rosemary and spices. The former was flavorful, thick

and mild. The latter was essentially chunks of spicy meat and veggies, akin to spicy *injera* tacos. The heat level was similar to “medium” salsa.

For the veggie dishes, we tried *Aterkik Key Wat*—yellow split peas, chili sauce, garlic and ginger—and *Tikil Gomen*, a dish made with cabbage, carrot, onion, garlic, ginger and spices. The pea dish had a lot of heat, the cabbage combo less so. Though the beef dishes were great, I think we enjoyed the veggie dishes more. The four were accompanied by *Ye Abesha Selata*, a chopped salad of lettuce, tomato, red onion and chili in a vinegar dressing. It was reminiscent of a great *pico de gallo* or coleslaw.

We supplemented our meal with *à la carte* dishes. *Ye Beg Key Wat* (\$15) was a spicy lamb stew; *Ye Doro Alicha* (\$14) was a mild chicken stew with onion, ginger, garlic and spices; *Gomen* (\$10) was a sauté of collard greens with onion, garlic, ginger and spices; and *Kikil* (\$10) was a dish featuring green beans, carrot, onion, garlic, ginger and spices. The lamb was quite spicy, reminding me of Indian goat curries. There were a couple of bone bits in the mix, but not too many. The chicken was thigh-on-the-bone in a very rich, thick gravy—not spicy but very tasty. The carrot and green bean mixture tasted mostly of the heavily stewed vegetables, and the collards were similarly just that: cooked greens.

Ultimately, I recommend the *gebeta* dishes, as they have the most exciting flavors. The rest are fine, but lack the punch. And *injera* is a bread we all need in our lives. Man, that stuff is sour, sweet, spongy, freaky, good. □

## Zagol Ethiopian Restaurant

3314 S. McCarran Blvd., 786-9020

Zagol is open Monday through Saturday 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Learn more at [zagolofreno.com](http://zagolofreno.com).