

Bole Ethiopian Cuisine, St. Paul

BY DYLAN HOLTMEIER

I HAD NEVER BEEN to an Ethiopian restaurant before, and I feel like I've been missing out my whole life.

The food there was honestly fantastic. All of the flavor combinations were well balanced and felt perfectly suited to each dish. There was a large range in flavor profiles between the items my friends and I ordered, yet they all were easily identifiable as related and from the same regional cuisine.

Not only was the food without fault, but the whole atmosphere and experience was pleasant as well. The restaurant is tucked away in a quiet neighborhood just off of Snelling Avenue, directly across from the State Fair, so it's pretty close to campus and easy to find. They used to be in Midway along University Avenue, but their building there was burned down last summer and had to relocate. The building itself is tastefully designed with warm earth tones throughout and good

lighting. Some restaurants feel intimidating or unfamiliar to walk in, but Bole was comforting right away.

My favorite part of the physical experience was eating with my hands. Our waitress showed us how to eat the food correctly, which made eating way more enjoyable than the standard utensils you can ask for. You take one of the rolls of injera, a spongy, slightly sour flatbread and rip off chunks, then hold the chunk in your fingers and pinch at the food with that. I'd been indoctrinated with the notion that eating food with your hands is uncalled for, but having it encouraged as the norm was more enjoyable than I thought it would be and really elevated the dining experience from good to great.

I've never had to ask for more time deciding what to order from the menu, but everything on it sounded so good I honestly couldn't decide which items to

choose; I didn't want to lose out on one entree by ordering another. I finally decided on the Crispy Kitfo as an appetizer and the Half & Half entree, choosing three portions of different vegetarian entrees and beef tibs, a type of stir fry. The Crispy Kitfo consisted of ground beef with warm, curry-adjacent spices rolled in injera and fried. All the entrees my friends and I ordered were some variation on tibs and came with injera and a small salad. I am partial to meat entrees and didn't expect much from the vegetarian options, but they were surprisingly good and I would order them again. My favorite vegetarian dish was After Kik, a curry flavored split pea mash which had a similar consistency to mashed potatoes.



Bole Ethiopian Cuisine Review, Photo Credit: Dylan Holtmeier