

Pondicheri signs lease to expand to NYC

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Pondicheri, the James Beard-nominated Indian restaurant in West Ave from chef Anita Jaisinghani, has signed a lease and will expand into New York City.

This will be the first location outside of Texas for Jaisinghani, who also co-owns Indika in Montrose.

Jaisinghani said she plans to open the restaurant on W. 27th Street in the Flatiron district of New York by the end of the year.

"It's the biggest move we've made in our business," Jaisinghani said.

Jaisinghani said she had planned to expand the restaurant into Austin, where she looked for a location for more than a year.

"Somehow, something with Austin just wasn't working out, so we began to look in New York in the spring of last year," Jaisinghani said. "I didn't think it would be this quick that we'd find a good location."

Pondicheri will take a little more than 3,300 square feet on the ground floor of an 11-story building at 15 W. 27th St., the Wall Street Journal reported. New York-based The Kaufman Organization owns the



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Paul Hester

The original Pondicheri, which recently expanded to add a bakery, is located in West Ave on Kirby and Westheimer roads.

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building in a joint venture with Iowa-based Principal Real Estate Investors as part of a four-property portfolio it purchased last year from New York-based Extell Development Co. Pondicheri is the first tenant signed on.

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Jaisinghani said she was working with a small design firm to design and build out the space, but was not ready to disclose the firm. She said she'll focus on the New York location and may consider an Austin location after that.

"There's no plan to rollout a dozen more because we do them one at a time," Jaisinghani said. "We are not trying to build a chain."

Jaisinghani said she is also developing plans for an e-commerce site that will include recipes, to encourage people to start cooking Indian food, not just eat it at restaurants.

"My goal is to make Indian food mainstream in America," Jaisinghani said. "It's not just delicious, it's good for you and makes you feel good."

West Ave, a mixed-use development located at Kirby and Westheimer, has had its share of restaurant turnover in the past year, but Pondicheri along with a few others haven't been affected. In fact, Pondicheri expanded to add a bake shop to their original West Ave location in Houston last year.