

Peju's Restaurant and Lounge

Classy interior, friendly service, and great jerk chicken.



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1724 Woodlawn Drive, Gwynn Oak, (410) 277-9779, pejuskitchen.com

Peju's is a bit more glamorous than you might expect from an establishment in the Security Square Mall. The interior is classy and red-lit, the service is friendly, and, the night we went, well-dressed patrons were bumpin' to Baltimore club in the attached lounge. Foodwise, you can go Caribbean or West African, as the mood strikes. The fufu options—starchy doughs made of yam or cassava (\$9.75 for a small with soup and assorted meat)—were sadly not available when we went, so we opted for the egusi and efo stew (\$4), made with spinach, a type of melon seed, and something chewy and fishy. An acquired taste, we imagine, but interesting nonetheless. The beef with jollof rice (\$9 for a small, which was huge) was satisfying, with a dense cut of beef—we could have chosen other options, including cow's feet, kidney, or tripe—and a mound of tomato-infused rice. The jerk chicken with fried rice (\$9 for a small) was the best of the lot, with moist, spicy/acrid chicken that fell off the bone and rice sprinkled with vegetables and tiny shrimp. We also appreciated the complementary appetizers: steaming, sugar-encrusted buns the size of donut holes. We'll be back, if only to try the fufu and the ogbono, a stew made of ground kernels of African mango nut (\$4 for a side).

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