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### Mustard oil to ginger and duck fat - the flavors are intense at Cress Restaurant



Cress Restaurant's Kobe Steak Sliders

By Rona Gindin, On Dining Host  
Last Updated: Monday, June 14, 2010 11:31 AM

DELAND -- Sentiment is so strong about Cress, a truly unusual gourmet-casual restaurant, that locals will do anything to keep their favorite DeLand dig busy.

I was brought to this charming and ambitious restaurant by my former accountant and his wife; we'd never socialized before yet they'd insisted on treating me to a Cress encounter just so I'd give the place some press.

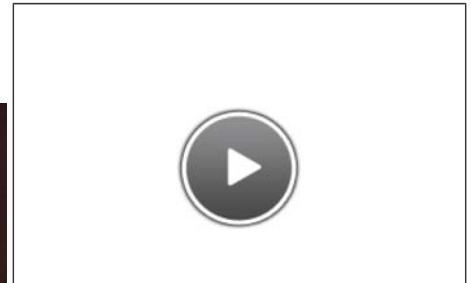
Done. Cress is truly unusual.

Its flavors are strikingly strong -- and chef-owner Hari Pulapaka, who runs Cress in partnership with wife Jenneffer, wants it that way. If he names an ingredient in the item's menu description, he wants you to know it's there.

"If I tell you a dish has pineapple in it, you're going to taste the pineapple," Hari told me. "There won't be just a hint of the flavor."

The Pulapakas took an unusual road to foodservice. Hari has a PhD in math and taught at Stetson University for many years. Jenneffer is a podiatrist with an active local practice. Over time, Hari tired of academia and was looking for something else.

An ad -- probably on TV, perhaps on the computer -- made him aware of the Orlando Culinary Academy. He decided to give culinary school a shot and attended at night while maintaining his day job. He graduated, apprenticed at a couple of restaurants and then hung out his own shingle.



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Hari wasn't new to food. As a child in India, he (begrudgingly) helped his mother make flatbreads and even did the marketing for her. He's as surprised as anyone that his former chore became his passion and career.

Today, instead of sharing mathematic formulas with young adults, this ambitious entrepreneur fusses over basil and turmeric and polenta, lovingly securing the perfect ingredients -- and then going wild in the kitchen.



Meet Hari and Jenneffer and indulge in flavors from around the world in the *On Dining* section under *Food* on **Central Florida On Demand**, Bright House cable **channel 300**.

Eat well,

Rona

**CRESS RESTAURANT**

103 West Indiana Avenue  
DeLand  
407.734.3740  
[Cress Restaurant Online](#)

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