

Couple claims restaurant let them wait

Newlyweds April Ayres and Melody Griffiths plan to file a complaint with the BC Human Rights Tribunal over an Aug 1 incident at Saffron Indian Cuisine at 4300 Kingsway in Burnaby.

Ayres claims that she and her wife, who were holding hands, were left waiting for a table, even as patrons who came in after them were seated.

"The woman managing the seating kept telling us that a table would come available for us soon," Griffiths writes on her LiveJournal page. "Even though she seated a woman who came in after us at a two-seater table, and a single younger guy at a table that seated four that came in even later. Each time she told us that a table would be open up 'in just a few minutes.'"

Saffron owner Kewal Sandhu describes his restaurant as a queer-friendly establishment. He says he is not aware of that incident and has received no complaints. "That Wednesday was a very busy afternoon," he says. "Sometimes we get very busy and we don't see everything."

Under normal circumstances seating is on a first come, first serve basis, he explains. "We give seating priority to whoever gets there first. Unless, of course they have a reservation; if they don't have a reservation and other customers have one then they don't get priority."

The couple left the establishment before they could get a seat, since Ayres was on her lunch break and had limited time.

Sandhu stresses that sexual orientation has nothing to do with how he treats his customers. "We don't notice if someone is a couple, friends or whatever. We don't have time to figure out who they are. To us, they are customers."

Ayres and Griffiths declined to comment on the matter, except to say they are pursuing the matter through the tribunal and seeking an apology.

They may not have to wait long. "I'm extremely sorry if that happened to them," says Sandhu. "It's too bad."

—Nathaniel Christopher