

Putting on the style and delivering taste

By Paul Fulford

THERE is style and there is substance, but the two rarely meet.

Which was the fear I harboured before I ate at Pushkar, a new Indian restaurant on Birmingham's bustling Broad Street.

The decor is stunning – lots of pale colours broken by tasteful artwork and eye-catching light fittings.

You enter across a floor lit up like a shimmering blue pond inhabited by moving goldfish.

The chairs are plush and the table settings exquisite.

The wine list, cocktail list and menu, all on scented paper, arrive in a box.

They are brought by pretty and attentive waitresses in almost Grecian-style dresses in a shiny, muted fabric.

For those of us who are old enough to remember, it's like stepping on to the cover of a Roxy Music album circa 1980.

There's a feeling of luxury and slightly dissolute hedonism as you sit there.

Then comes the food from an admirably short menu whose main thrust is northern Indian.

And here my heart skipped a beat, for what we ate was very good indeed. Style and substance had met, shaken hands and formed a damned fine partnership.

The poppadoms we were brought were good, crisp things, though the garishly coloured ones struck



Food critic Paul Fulford reviews the city's eateries. Visit birminghammail.net and then click 'blogs'.

Style with substance: Pushkar in Birmingham's Broad Street.

spuds and chickpeas and topped with yoghurt and tamarind sauce.

Main courses, too, delivered.

The awadhi gosht korma I ordered comprised absurdly tender lamb in a rich and delicate sauce with many layers of flavour.

Murray's palialashahi gosht, another lamb dish, likewise won approval.

Perhaps, though, the stars of the show were the creamy but sassy black lentils that Lynn ordered – a satisfying dish of remarkable depth of flavour. But her vegetable kofta dish ran it a close second.

Breads and rice were of a similarly high standard.

The garam masala brulee I ate as a pudding was exemplary in textures and spiced with sensible restraint.

Murray's carrot halwa was a sweet and beguiling thing.

However, Lynn thought the filling of her chocolate samosa a little too firm.

But this is a quibble about classy and tasty food prepared by Bishal Rasaly, a chef with a fine pedigree.

Our very reasonable bill also included cocktails and beer.

OUR TOP 5... Indiabn restaurants

BLUE MANGO
Stylish place offering food that has a lightness of touch.
Gas Street Basin. 0121 633 4422.

LASAN
Fantastic modern light food.
Dakota Buildings, James Street, Birmingham. 0121 212 3664.

MAHARAJA
Old favourite that serves quality curries.
23-25 Hurst Street, Birmingham. 0121 622 2641.

ASHA'S
Great cocktails, pleasant decor, good food.
12-22 Newhall Street, Birmingham. 0121 200 2767.

JYOTI
Tremendous South Indian veggie fare at a great price.
1045 Stratford Road, Hall Green. 0121 788 5501.

Verdict

How much? £76 for three
Vegetarians? Choices
Child friendly? Yes
Disabled access? Fine
Parking? Nearby
Go back? With delight
Value: ££££
Food, decor service: ★★★★★

Tipping's Tips



How do I get a perfect duck?

QI want to roast a duck so the skin is crisp and the flesh succulent. What do I do?

Edward, Great Barr

AI can do many things but I can't guarantee you will get a tender duck. This is down to you and the quality of the duck you buy. I suggest a Gressingham is a good variety.

The only drawback in roasting a whole bird is that to cook the legs properly you will have to cook it for too long for the breasts to be perfectly pink, as gastronomic purists tell you it should be. But I think duck meat is flavoursome even if slightly overcooked.

To cook, put the bird in a roasting tin, season lightly with salt and pepper. Place in a hot oven, gas mark 9, for about 20 minutes, turn down the oven to gas mark 6 and cook for a further hour and a half, basting every 20 minutes. Poke a skewer into the leg if the juices run clear the duck is cooked.

It is important to leave the duck to rest for at least 15 minutes before carving. This will also help the meat to be tender.

■ Luke Tipping is head chef at Simpson's Restaurant, 20 Highfield Road, Edgbaston. 0121 454 3434 or www.simpsonsrestaurant.co.uk If you've got a culinary question for Luke, email paul.fulford@birminghammail.net or write to Paul Fulford, Birmingham Mail, Floor 6, Fort Dunlop, Fort Parkway, Birmingham B24 9FF.

Ingredient Of The Week



BY JONATHAN PARNELL

Goose makes top alternative

Before being usurped by turkey, goose was the preferred choice for the Christmas lunch table in England and more recently there are signs of it making a bit of a comeback.

Goose meat is richer and darker than turkey. It has a higher fat content, but a lot of the fat melts away during cooking, leaving deliciously tasty and succulent meat.

Although not cheap, goose makes a wonderful treat for any special meal. In addition, the goose fat collected during cooking makes the best roast potatoes and is almost worth the entrance price alone.

■ Jonathan Parnell is executive chef at Filini at the Radisson Blu Hotel, Birmingham.

WIN a meal for 4 at Pushkar

TO WIN a meal for 4 at the fabulous Pushkar Restaurant on Broad Street simply answer the following question...

What would you traditionally have to start an Indian meal?

- a) Poppodoms
- b) Pizza
- c) Pasta

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