



The Eastern Eye

Now firmly established after 19 award-winning years, this unique and magnificent Indian restaurant ably demonstrates why it is still all the Raj with the city's diners

Only the wide staircase visible through the small glass-fronted foyer off not-so-quiet Street gives any hint of the scale, though not the grandeur, of the room above on the first floor. Built originally for exhibitions, meetings and public lectures, the Georgian architecture is impressive by any standards. Natural light from the large elegant windows front and back is enhanced by three splendid glass domes in the ceiling, each separated by classical ornate arches. Add to this tastefully understated decor from the Indian subcontinent and it knocks your average curry eaterie into a cocked hat.

The sense of dining in another age – perhaps the heady days of the Raj – is easy to imagine, yet whether you are dressed in style or in casual clothes, the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly. Of course the reputation of The Eastern Eye is not based solely on the splendid setting, and this family-run business has won enough culinary awards and plaudits to match its famous interior.

Cold beer goes particularly well with Indian cuisine, so before we cast an eye over the menu we chose as an aperitif a refreshing, but potent, bottled brew – Bangla Premium (£3.95) – that could certainly hold its own with the strongest flavoured food. We recommend you leave the car at home if you settle for one or more Banglas!

The interesting and informative menu focuses mainly on the North



The Eastern Eye was recently awarded the best Curryhouse in the west in the British Curry Awards 2005 and were placed in the top thirty national curry houses.

Frontier, though there are also many regional dishes on offer. In case the roof of your mouth is not lined like a tandoori oven, there is a helpful one-to-three-chilli grading. Green is for mild, red for hot – three reds are presumably for fire-eaters and dragons.

The main problem is that because there is so much choice, decision making can be difficult. Thankfully the service is top notch and there is always advice on hand to help you over the hurdles.

Only one of the team chose a starter – the other already having indulged in a rather heavy lunch.

There are some old stalwarts like chicken tikka (£3.10), onion bhaji (£2.50) and tandoori mixed kebab (£4.20), but the exotic samosa (£2.50), a crispy triangular

pastry stuffed with spicy vegetables, certainly hit the right spot. We stuck with beer throughout the meal, although the well considered wine list starts at £11.95 and offers two whites and a red by the glass from £2.60.

One of the delights of Indian cuisine is the colour and presentation, and the sight of showcase dishes arriving at tables even stirs the jaded appetite of the seasoned Indian enthusiast.

We opted for lamb rogan josh (£6.50), cooked with tomatoes and onions with a side dish of pilau rice (£4) and king prawn jhol (£11.50), a spicy Bangladeshi dish cooked with mustard oil, with a side dish of green pepper bhaji (£3). The tender lamb was subtly spiced and complemented by the aromatic rice. The king prawn was firm yet succulent with lively spices and the fresh clean taste of the green pepper bhaji was the perfect accompaniment.

Although there was no real need for a dessert – particularly for the lunch piglet – we shared a delicious kulfi; the Indian version of ice cream (£3.95).

‘In Xanadu,’ goes Coleridge’s famous poem ‘did Kubla Kahn a stately pleasure dome decree’ – well the Eastern Eye has three. Truly a jewel in the crown. □

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