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By Melody Wren, Dining Out | Wed Jun 15 2011 | 4 Recommended

Authentic Indian tickles taste buds

What is it about Indian food that so many of us love? Traditional fare, full of exotic spices and rich flavours, can spark our imaginations about another part of the world.

This is the case with Diwa Classic Indian Cuisine. It's location in a strip mall on a busy corner belies the elegance and unpretentious warm of the restaurant's interior with it's classic tasteful decor.

It offers authentic Indian cuisine, not the archetypal chicken curry takeout offered by many.

In the spirit of adventure, my dining companion ordered an Indian Cheetah beer, described as "naturally brewed for Indian and other spicy cuisine" and was smooth, light, and refreshing. The Indian Monsoon white wine, similar to a Riesling, but drier, was also pleasing.

A starter vegetable platter got our taste buds off to a rousing start. The generous serving included two samosas, four pakoras, and two spring rolls. It was elegantly presented with a tomato rose garnish, served with tamarind sauce, spicy mint sauce, and mango chutney. The samosas were traditional filled with chopped potatoes, peas and hits of hot peppers and were pretty spicy. The pakoras were light, crisp, complex and flavor-filled, the spring rolls simply filled with shredded carrots, and mildly seasoned.

We chose a variety of main from the substantial offering. The baigan patiala (\$10.95) a dish of mini eggplants tempered with mustard seeds, simmered with fresh herbs and spices in a light, gentle sauce was delightful and packed with flavor.

The kerla fish curry (\$17.95) is halibut cooked in South Indian spices, fresh curry leaves, mustard seeds and coconut cream, flawlessly poached in a richly delicate coconut cream, subtly layered with complex spices which seemed totally appropriate with the fish.

A generous portion of lamb biryani was served in basmati rice which was packed with nuts, raisins and dried fruit with mild hints of spices. The lamb was dry and chewy and the flavour was disappointing.

Naan bread is a must to accompany any Indian meal. The peshwari naan is a bit different than the traditional plain or garlic. At Diwa, all the naan is served hot and fresh and so amazingly tasty, it was gobbled it up quickly. The combination of walnuts, apricots, raisins and cashews described on the menu as being "stuffed" were actually combined and crushed into a paste. The paste is hidden inside the naan which made each bite of the pillow soft bread with crisp edges brushed with butter so delicious. Definitely one of the highlights of the meal, and I would return just for that.

Raiti is a traditional accompaniment to the spicier dishes, its creamy refreshing taste tames the heat. Classic and lovely, it is a combination of yogurt, cucumber and mint.

The dessert menu was out of print, but our delightful server recited the choices and answered all of our naïve questions. The choices were rice pudding with saffron and pistachio, mango or pistachio sorbet, or gulab jamun, which is condensed milk dumplings served in cardamom syrup, one of the most popular desserts.

We shared ras malai, an Indian delicacy, miniature mounds of paneer, Indian cottage cheese in pistachio milk, topped with crushed pistachios. The taste was refreshing with a texture and flavor similar to a light cheesecake with a gentle essence of cardamom. It was authentic and exotic and beautifully presented.

Time and attention to detail is clearly taken preparing each dish as the classic Indian cuisine bursts with fresh ingredients.

Neighbouring shop India Spice House is also owned by the restaurant, so if you are inspired to take home Samosas or Pakoras baked by the chef you can pick them up. This is the place to stock up on noodles, rice and sauces to produce your own genuine Indian dishes

Two and a half forks

Hours

Open for lunch and dinner, except Sundays

Cuisine



Dining Out Diwa Classic Indian Cuisine 336 Speedvale Avenue West, Guelph, (519) 826-9711



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