

# Tasting Treats

Words and pictures: Caroline Bingham



I have always liked the sound of a tasting menu because it conjures up the notion of being able to nibble and graze my way through the style and flavour of a menu without the temptation of my fork wandering over to my companion's plates during the meal because I like the look of what they have ordered. Tasting menus had not really entered our vocabulary when I lived in Manchester in the late '70s and early '80s but authentic Indian cuisine certainly had and I graduated not only from University but from the mainly Pakistani restaurants along the 'Curry Mile' of Rusholme to their sophisticated competitors in the city centre.

Gorkha Square is a Nepalese and Indian Restaurant which has been open since November in the centre of Grantham and I was curious to explore the Nepalese influences within the menu. We were very warmly welcomed by Shyan Maharjan the joint owner and front of house manager and his head chef and business partner, Bishnu Chand. They had been talking with Spencer Baker from Ancaster Butchers who supplies all the fresh local meat to the restaurant and who had been enjoying his meal while awaiting our arrival. The interior of the restaurant is open plan on an L shape with a centrally located bar. This light and airy space is painted white with modern artwork on the walls and beautiful curtaining which

complements the finish to the woodwork. We were shown to our modern and very comfortable table and seats. My companion ordered a gin and tonic but as I was driving and I prefer

obvious that while the style and ideas for the food may have travelled miles, the ingredients certainly have not and a great deal of care is being taken to source the best quality produce to deliver a fine dining experience.

We enjoyed a tray of mini poppadoms with pickles to accompany our drinks and next we tried four of the choices from the seven course taster menu which is offered on Wednesday evenings. We began with a Paneer Pastry which was a filo pastry roll filled with spiced home-made cottage cheese. Next came a Lamb Malai Kebab; minced lamb fragrantly spiced and mixed with melted cheese and tandoor cooked in a skewer. Thirdly we enjoyed cubes of paneer marinated in fresh mint and coriander and to follow salmon Tikka and Coconut Chicken Tikka. All these dishes were beautifully delicate in both their proportions and flavours and presented with vegetable garnishes plus swirls of spicy or sweet sauces made from spinach, mango, mint or coriander. These were just a small selection from the appetizers and Chef's special appetizers on the menu.

We next each chose from the Chef's Special Main Dishes. I opted for Roasted Sea Bass with fresh lemon leaf, ginger, garlic, sumac and chilli oven cooked and served with onion bhaji on a bed of spinach. The sea bass was very fresh and cooked with a great deal of care. My companion chose the

a long drink with spiced food, I decided to have a Cobra alcohol free beer. It had been a very hot day and the Cobra arrived ice cold, condensation trickling down the sides of the bottle. The label said it was a smooth drink and it was a perfect thirst quencher. I noticed diners at other tables were enjoying bottles of Nepalese Gurkha beer which is brewed under licence in Suffolk but I will have to try that another time. It was



MR SHYAN MAHARJAN (SECOND FROM LEFT) AND HIS TEAM



very fruity and mild Mango Chicken which was served with boiled rice and we both really enjoyed these dishes although by now we were wishing we had worn something looser round our middles.

Definitely time to take a breather and it gave us chance to chat with some of the other diners who were in the restaurant. The party of six next to us were part regulars and part first time customers. They were very impressed with the quality of the food, the friendly service and the beautiful presentation of each dish. Another group had travelled from Stamford to dine and did so regularly because they could find no parallel more locally to the food being served at Gorkha Square.

Desserts are never a big section of Indian menus unless you are eating in a sweet centre but I like the palate cleansing effect of many Indian sweets. We chose to share a dish of Ras Malai which worked like magic and satisfied our sweet tooth. We declined coffee as we both agreed we hadn't room for anything else.

As well as the very extensive main menu on which appears eleven different curries, ranging from masala to chatapata and biryani, Gorkha Square offers a buffet on Tuesday evenings, a tasting menu on Wednesday evenings and authentic Thali each Thursday. There is an extensive wine list from which to choose as well as the choice of European and Indian beers.

Shyan Maharjan, Bishnu Chand and their staff were charming hosts and deserve to be recognised for their use of locally sourced produce served with a great deal of flair. They are committed to the quality of their food and customer experience and even offer a takeaway service within the Grantham vicinity to help encourage customers to try their menu. However, I would recommend a visit to Gorkha Square to appreciate the enthusiasm of this team and their food.



Gorkha Square,  
1 Wharf Road,  
Grantham NG31 6BA  
Tel: 01476 574477

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