

Fine curries, no worries

This addition to Glasgow's Indian restaurant scene is a winner already – although they do need to fix the main menu



RON MACKENNA
EATING OUT

Consider this. An evening that begins with a pocketful of spanners and a dead Piaggio scooter in a tabloid editor's back garden ends up in a hotel I used to work in and very nearly becomes a review.

The only teensy problem is this. Lyndsay, whose scooter I am trying to start, suggests a curry at Bukharah in the new Lorne. "It's a thank-you, mate," he says. "We might bump into Archie Shariff, the owner." Bump into? He's only standing at the door of the hotel with his hand extended in welcome and a knowing grin on his face. And then he's only marshalling armies of waiters to bring burnished platters of delicious food prompting Mr Dinsmore, who joins us, to say: "This will be the impartial review then, Ron." Ha ha.

So sometimes you have to return. Alone. In the hope of sneaking in, secret squirrel, when everyone's back is turned. To get a proper look at this rebuilt hotel where I spent many a pleasant student night selling £50 glasses of brandy to dodgy kitchen salesmen, serving wedding food to hordes of party steamers and drinking into the late hours with other staff at the big smoked-glass conservatory.

Which has now been replaced. As have walls, kitchens, bars, even lift shafts in an oh-crikey transformation that has opened up the long-closed, rabbit-warren Lorne into a cool brick and low-lighting cavern of cocktail bars and flitting staff, and something called a healthy Indian restaurant.

Unfortunately for the subterfuge, Archie's still at the door. Hand still outstretched to new customers. Though if I'm surprised to see him, it looks like he's completely startled to see me. Fortunately, it's the same specials menu that was on the other night. With the outstanding and fiery Rashmi kebab of spiced minced tandoori chicken and the soothing sweet'n'sour north Indian papri chatt of potatoes, chick peas and deep spicing piled high on crisp'n'soft fried crunchy dough. If this is street food transformed to a restaurant setting inside a hotel, it's absolutely superb.

There's a chicken handi and a lamb handi, both named after the narrow pots used to cook them, and both simple and deep and at long last moved from the staff menu of Indian restaurants to the mainstream.

And there's the star of the show. The mathi chaman of curried cheese, spices and mushrooms, looking to all the world like a scrambled egg but tasting different and fresh and, actually, despite the picture it conjures in the mind, excellent.

There are also monkfish kebabs, which have lost something in the marinating process, paneer chawal, or rice cooked with cheese, and a kulcha filled with onions and potatoes. All this for under £15 for two courses and £20 for three.

That is value, but then again Bukharah is sandwiched right between Glasgow's best two Indian restaurants, Balbir's and Mother India, and if eyelids are not twitching over an



Bukharah offers a new take on Indian dining, and its specials are not to be missed

PHOTOGRAPH: COLIN MEARNIS

impending curry war at the top end of the market, then they should be. Nobody wins from wars? Nobody except the customers.

Of course, there are problems. The sole marinated in spices should never, ever have been served with fried potatoes, and the main menu is a complete mess of British dishes mixed with dull Indian restaurant staples that urgently needs a complete rethink, if not a swift trip to the bin.

And what about this healthy Indian food lark? Is it a cheeky tilt at Balbir's ghee-free cooking? Search me, but as I don't think a dollop of flavour-enhancing ghee in a once or

BUKHARAH

Lorne Hotel
923 Sauchiehall
Street, Glasgow
(0141 330 1550)

HOURS Seven days,
noon-midnight
MENU Specials
menu is where the
action is, with
new dishes and a

freshish take on
the curry scene.
Main menu needs
completely rethought.

3/5
ATMOSPHERE Cool,
relaxing, bare brick,
low lighting and
cocktails. Different. **4/5**
SERVICE First rate –
but I was spotted. **4/5**

PRICE At £14.95 for
two courses of
something different
it's excellent
value. **5/5**
FOOD Excellent, but
let's have more
unusual dishes on the
menu. Has real
potential. **7/10**
TOTAL **23/30**

twice a month curry does any harm, does it really matter? Whatever oil is used instead of ghee in here, it doesn't detract from the flavour, which is about the best we're going to get.

How good is Bukharah then? Pretty good, actually, and these are early days. Whether the idea of having a decent curry in a boutique restaurant setting will catch on in Glasgow is hard to say. But as an opening shot it should be enough to make the curry establishment sit up and take notice. ■

If you know a restaurant Ron should review, e-mail ronmackenna@fastmail.fm.

RON RECOMMENDS

This is a selection of the 25 most interesting restaurants in Scotland as chosen by our critic Ron Mackenna

Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles

Auchterarder
(01764 694267)

Champany Inn

Linlithgow, West Lothian
(01506 834532)

Hotel du Vin

Glasgow
(0141 339 2001)

Martin Wishart

Edinburgh
(0131 553 3557)

Glenapp Castle

Ballantrae
(01465 831212)

Braidwoods

By Dalry, North Ayrshire
(01294 833544)

The Dogs

Edinburgh
(0131 220 1208)

The Plumed Horse

Leith (0131 554 5556)

The Kitchin

Leith
(0131 555 1755)

Le Chardon d'Or

Glasgow
(0141 248 3801)

Balbir's

Glasgow
(0141 339 7711)

MacCallum's

Troon, South Ayrshire
(01292 319339)

Crabshakk

Glasgow
(0141 334 6127)

Seafood Temple

Oban
(01631 566000)

Bella Mbriana

Edinburgh
(0131 558 9581)

Gandolfi Fish

Glasgow
(0141 552 9475)

Redwood

Edinburgh
(0131 225 8342)

Asia Style

Glasgow
(0141 338 8828)

The Grill at Dakota

Edinburgh
(0870 220 8281)

Chop Chop

Edinburgh
(0131 221 1155)

Knockinaam Lodge

Portpatrick
(01776 810471)

Wee Hurrie

Troon
(01292 319339)

Kampong Ah Lee

Edinburgh
(0131 662 9050)

Coast

Oban (01631 569900)

Osteria Piero

Glasgow
(0141 248 3471)