

OUT OF TOWN

Indian Summer

Words: David Hillier

**69 East St, Brighton,
East Sussex BN1 1HQ**www.indian-summer.org.uk

Situated a pebble's throw from the beach on East Street, Indian Summer has been trading since 2001, when founders Minesh Agnihotri and Byron Swales arrived in Brighton on a mission to wean Britons off Chicken Tikka Masala.

From the start unfussy authenticity has been the key, with a focus on dishes native to India, presented in a modern style and environment and using only the finest ingredients. For the most part it works tremendously.

Opening papeds (poppadums to you and me) were accompanied by the sort of chutneys we vaguely recognised from platters gone by. Except the raita was pregnant with creamy yoghurt and fizzed with fresh mint; a world away from the anaemic sock water you get down your average Spice Hut. By the same dint, the pickle wasn't rubbery lumps of lime rind in an oozing, bitty jam, but delicately mixed vegetables that were tangy enough to flex my tastebuds, but not so spicy as to put off my companion, who had until now kept quiet about "not being the best with chilli."

Starters were Veg Manchurian and Dum Prawns Hariyali. The former was the best executed, with carrot, cabbage and cauliflower dumplings stir-fried with mixed peppers and spring onions in a ginger-flecked tomato sauce. If the presence of the root makes it sound something suspiciously like fusion, chef Minesh assures that this is native to Southern India. My mint-marinated king prawns were the size of my fist, and sitting atop



a sauce that wasn't unlike pond-water in look and consistency. Thankfully it didn't taste so, though to this spice-greedy palette it wanted a little extra pep.

Fortunately this need was swiftly sated by the Charminari Lamb, which came recommended by our charming waitress. A multi-layered marinade had poppy seeds and ginger to the fore, shot through with enough heat to have me happily mopping my brow. Accompanied by a small boater of mustard kadhi- a thick, sweet and sour sauce that is the infinitely more satisfying cousin of Korma- and chilli-kissed potato thoran it was as complete a dish as I've had all year. My only gripe was I wanted more of it.

My date's Malayhi Jhinga was the most disappointing

dish of the night, tasting a little like prawns in ragu sauce, though the green bean and asparagus thoran that accompanied it was a masterclass in spicing up seasonal greens. The mustard seeds speckled throughout made these greens sing.

From there to the restaurant's flagship Mango Brulee which was as delicious as it sounds, combining perfectly the twin worlds of dairy decadence and fruity crunch. According to Minesh, it was a dish that back home they would only have at special occasions like birthdays, and that if he saw his mother making it he knew a celebration was in the offing. Sitting there on this fairly ordinary evening, it made me feel exactly the same way.

OUT OF TOWN

5&33

Words: Karin Rus

**Martelaarsgracht 5, 1012TN,
Amsterdam, the Netherlands**www.5and33.nl

When thinking of Amsterdam, do you mostly envision stag parties, the red light district and lighting up legally? at last! Then think again. Apart from its somewhat infamous legacy, the city offers an abundance of sophisticated choices, from arty galleries to chic cocktail bars and luxury lounges to top restaurants - 100 Michelin starred ones at least at the last count. And now there is a brand new place that offers it all in one. 5&33 is located on the ground floor of the recently opened and ever so elegant Art'otel Amsterdam, right opposite the Central Station. In the middle of the tourist epicentre and only a stone's throw from the red light district, here's a most representative of experiences for what is this most impressive modern, vibrant and liberal city.

Cleverly named for its location at number 5 Martelaarsgracht with the hotel entrance around the corner at 33 Prins Hendrikkade, the first thing to catch the eye is the curtained wall with a wired

electronic interface. Sensitive to human touch, patrons are encouraged to create patterns and images simply with their palms and fingers. There is a dedicated art gallery downstairs brimming with works from resident art director and sculptor Joep van Lieshout. These are early days of course and there will be a revolving policy of exhibiting works by Dutch and international artists. The main floor consists of a swanky restaurant, an expansive library and cocktail bar. And all this is contained in a hotel which wouldn't look out of place among the modernist architectural gems of Rotterdam.

The pick of the cocktails are Holy Viagra (tequila, chilli, pineapple juice) and Gin Daisy (with homemade hibiscus and pomegranate syrup), both well balanced and bursting with the individual flavours of their constituent ingredients. Apart from the specials, the bartenders shake their way through an extensive list of classics that include Bloody Mary, Singapore Sling and Pisco Sour. As for the restaurant, as you might expect from a Mediterranean themed eatery, the wine list is ever so impressive, with a compendious selection of Italian, French, Chilean and Austrian varieties in various shades of white, pink and red.

Every dish is meant for sharing, but to call the food tapas would be unfair. This is fusion cooking at its best. The menu



offers a great selection of cured meats, cheeses and breads, pastas and salads and vegetarian, fish and meat dishes. The yellow tail with borlotti beans and rainbow chard is gorgeous; the breaded lamb cutlet with baba ganoush is moist, tender and has a delectably smoky aftertaste. If you love seafood the deep fried soft shell crab is a must. On the other hand, meat lovers should sample the grilled rib of beef - or just get both, as we did. Steak is served with forest mushroom salad flavoured with chicory, garlic and

chilli - a fresh and crisp counterbalance to the red meat. Every dish was proof in itself of the amount of expertise and detail that went into it both in terms of taste as well as the garnished beauties that ended up on the table. The dusky ambience gets dusker as the night progresses and the dancefloor beckons. 5&33 is exciting and most of all - we'll just have to say it - sexy. It's everything we love about Amsterdam rolled into one - sans the delights of the sweet leaf. We all know there's plenty of that to roll elsewhere.