

The View review

Dia Newland *adds spice to her marriage*



Anokaa • 60 Fisherton Street • Salisbury • Wiltshire • SP2 7RB
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I know it's a cliché, but why are men so difficult to buy presents for? My husband and I don't fuss much on birthdays, just enjoy the cards and the odd pressie, but this year, for no particular reason, I decided instead to treat the man of my house to a slap-up meal. Several times I've heard tell of Anokaa in Salisbury. It was rumoured to take Indian cuisine to a new level and the result to be darn good. It sounded perfect for a man who enjoys his spices, so this would be his treat.

A hum of conversation underlaid by gentle music greeted us as we were met at the door and led to our table. There is something very relaxing about settling down at a table set with sparkling glasses, the crispest white tablecloths and napkins, and being attended by a smiling waiter.

While we chose our meal we were offered drinks and poppadoms with pickles, which gave us time to look through the extensive menu. The traditional dishes were tucked away at the bottom, giving us an opportunity to consider the unique take put on the other dishes described.

'The birthday boy chose stir-fried black tiger prawns, almost too pretty to eat'

I decided to plump for the mixed platter to start. This is designed to be shared by two people and it arrived on a beautiful boat-shaped platter; barbecued garlic-spiced chicken, pakoras, sago tikki, and Punjabi samosa. Each mouthful was a tender and tasty treat. The birthday boy chose stir-fried black tiger prawns, almost too pretty to eat... but having admired it for two seconds he devoured it with relish. A decent recommendation, I thought.

For my main course I had chicken curry

lababdar; this is a south Indian home-style curry with fresh coconut, ginger and sweet chilli, and steamed rice. Although I wouldn't normally choose a dry curry (I have a weakness for all that sauce), I found the spicy piquancy of the dish easily compensated me, and the texture of the chicken was perfect.

John chose duck jaalsha; lean duck pieces crisped over charcoal then mixed with apricot, ginger and white wine, simmered in a fairly strong spiced sauce with cream of coconut, bay leaf and cardamom and served

with lemon rice. It lived up to expectations, a work of art both in looks and taste. Although the description is 'fairly strongly spiced' we decided this was more to do with flavour than heat.

Another diner we spoke to had chosen old Delhi-style chicken curry; honey and orange glazed chicken curry in a rich tomato gravy with cream of coconut and fenugreek leaves served with pulao rice – chosen, she told me, because it was recommended for the mildness of the dish. It was reported to be more palatable for those with less hardy taste buds, yet still flavoursome.

'... he has appreciated the appeal of modern trends for lighter, freshly cooked food, artfully arranged'

Puban Kuma Bhaniya, Anokaa's executive chef, has been clever in retaining the identity of Indian cuisine, but he has appreciated the appeal of modern trends for lighter, freshly cooked food, artfully arranged. With locally sourced ingredients, as well as authentic herbs and spices, he has created a dining experience like no other.

I don't know how we did it but we managed pudding. Darjeeling-style mille feuille; chocolate and passion-fruit mousse with crisp dark chocolate and cream of passion fruit. Delicious. In contrast, the rose and lime cheesecake, glazed with raspberry and rosewater jelly, gave a freshness to the palette to end the meal. Superior sweet treats from a superior restaurant. ♥

Our meal, without drinks, came to £60.95

