

# The View review

**Rosemary Staal**  
*enjoys a 'special' occasion*



**Hox Brasserie • 155 Fisherton Street • Salisbury • 01722 341600 • hoxbrasserie.co.uk**

**T**he word 'special' tends to be overworked these days. From 'special offer' right through to 'that special something', the adjective is flung about with such abandon that it has virtually lost its meaning.

So let's define it, courtesy of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary: 'Of such a kind as to exceed or excel in some way that which is usual or common'. Now, having clarified the true meaning of the word, let me tell you that Hox Brasserie is special. It qualifies for that now-refreshed and shining adjective by excelling at what it does, not just in some way but in all ways.

The food is Indian, mainly south Indian, but that is where any comparison with an ordinary Indian restaurant ends. Yes, you can certainly order a curry, but you need never fear that it will arrive at your table submerged under an inch-deep slick of dodgy looking oil. The food that comes out Hox's kitchen is of the highest order and a very long way from

the crude attack on the tastebuds that is the trademark of many curry houses.

Here, where wine served in crystal glasses is a more common sight than a pint of lager, you can pick your way through a menu of delights that offers thoughtful combinations of flavours, colours and textures.

One of the great pleasures of dining at Hox is to be served by the most punctilious and charming staff. From the moment we walk in, when they all look up and smile in welcome, we feel they want us to share in their happiness at being there.

Another great pleasure is the groovy décor, which includes a coloured wall of water, light boxes that change colour along another wall, recessed blue lights in the stair treads and beautifully dressed white tables that contrast with the black floors.

The chef, Swamy, is from Bangalore, in southern India, and he and Hox's owner,

Atiqul Hoque, share a passion for the food from a region that of course includes Goa, with all its great seafood traditions and its Portuguese influences.

Accordingly, D and I both choose Tiger prawns for our starters, mine marinated with turmeric and herbs, and his tossed in a peppery Malabar masala. They are delicious – simple dishes that contain flavours both delicate and complex.

For our main courses D and I head off to different parts of the menu. He chooses lamb madras ('I would only have meat in a top-notch Indian restaurant,' he says, with confidence), with vegetable rice and bombay aloo. I adore spinach, so as soon as I see I can have it served with cubes of Indian cheese – saag paneer – I have to have it. Atiqul recommends I accompany it with a plain steamed basmati rice 'so you will be able to taste all the flavours'. He is right. Emerald-green spinach and simple white rice are as joyous to the eye as they are to the tastebuds. D is in raptures about his meal, which is quite something from a man who has first-class honours in curry-eating.

We finish with mango kulfi, a fresh and fruity palate-cleanser thankfully not served in a frozen block but in neat discs that melt in the mouth.

How sad, it's all over. We have enjoyed ourselves so much at this place that has 'special' written all over it.

**\* Our three-course meal for two, without wine: £36V**

