

# The View review

*In the presence of virtue, Rosie Staal thanks her lucky stars for pure culinary talent*



**Hox Brasserie • 155 Fisherton Street • Salisbury • SP2 7RP  
01722 341600 • www.hoxbrasserie.co.uk**

The woman at the next table is talking about her daily fitness regime. 'I start with a 10-mile walk every morning and then there's Pilates and swimming on a Monday, an hour's spinning on a Tuesday, cycling and swimming on a Wednesday...'

I tune out before she reaches the rigours of a Thursday.

While she continues listing her virtuous timetable of self-improvement in what I presume is a quest for the title of Miss Completely Perfect 2010, I turn my attention to the menu and the question of what to eat.

D and I are seated in comfort at a white-clothed table with smart cutlery and angular plates. This is an Indian restaurant, but not as we know it. In fact, Hox calls itself a brasserie and a glimpse at the menu indicates how very much this differs from the chicken-tikka-masala-and-pilau-rice type of curry house.

Here, we could have one of those sorts of dishes if we wanted, indeed two young men near us choose a jalfrezi and a Madras, but the main focus of the menu is on what one might describe as a more discerning or adventurous palate.

It is an exciting prospect. D and I adore our curries, but we also appreciate how the



**Sweet potato cakes with tamarind and spiced yogurt**



**Meen Moilee – tandoori monkfish in an onion, ginger and coconut sauce, with garlic spinach and steamed rice**

judicious use of spices can produce food that is aromatic, flavoured to a delicate or intense degree – sometimes even both at the same time – and that leaves a lingering impression of one's senses having been transported somewhere unusual and very wonderful. Holding back on the chilli certainly helps in this respect, and the other requirement is a talented team in the kitchen, which is very much the case here.

Atiqul Hoque, who opened Hox four years ago, has Rajeev Kumar as his head chef. His considerable skills have been honed both in India and the UK, where he worked at the Cinnamon Club in Westminster and at the great Chutney Mary in the King's Road.

We've eaten at Chutney Mary and even now, 10 years later, can fall into a soppy reverie whenever we recall the experience. We therefore feel confident that we're in good hands here at Hox, with Rajeev at the helm.

And so it proves. In fact, by the time we finish – long after Miss Completely Perfect 2010 has gone home for her eight hours of dreamless sleep – we reckon you can keep Chutney Mary and its terrifying prices, and

thank your lucky stars that Hox is on our patch. Now that an initially irksome parking issue has been sorted, with permits issued to diners enabling them to park a few yards away on privately owned land, Hox really has it all.

So much scene-setting and I hardly have space left to list what we ate. Suffice to say it was all, without exception, delicious, presented with great flair and served by some of the best waiting staff I have ever encountered.

D ate: a starter of spiced lamb chops, followed by Laal Maans – Rajasthan-style hot lamb leg curry braised with Kashmir chilli and garlic – and a sweet indulgence of saffron syrup soaked pudding balls with vanilla ice-cream.

I ate: sweet potato cakes with tamarind spiced yogurt, followed by Meen Moilee – tandoori monkfish in an onion, ginger and coconut sauce, with garlic spinach and steamed rice. Happily, with our virtuous neighbour out of the way, I felt able to enjoy a pudding of homemade pistachio kulfi.

And if you think all that sounds good, believe me, it tastes even better than that. ✓

**Our three-course meal for two, without drinks, cost £42.15**



**Spicy lamb chops**