

# The View review

**Dia Newland** *runs out of time but turns down the heat with a spicy buffet*



**The Balti House • 139 Fisherton Street • Salisbury • SP2 7DT • 01722 325288**

It may not be a truth universally acknowledged, but in my world it's certainly true; there are times when a woman needs a restaurant that she can turn to when she runs out of hours in the day. Don't get me wrong, it doesn't happen that often, but when I had one of those days recently, we headed for The Balti House in Salisbury.

Parking at The Maltings made Fisherton Street an easy walk from Salisbury centre and Roniibrahim, the manager, gave us a warm welcome. The restaurant, set out in clean, modern lines with diffused lighting, made any thoughts of maroon flock wallpaper and dark tables recede quickly into the past, where they belong.

Although it was still quite early there were already diners busily tucking in and I looked forward to doing the same. Roniibrahim explained that they have an inexpensive, pay-per-head, no-frills, buffet style of dining. Having shown us to our seats and made sure we had drinks on the table (we chose Cobra beer to go with our meal), he introduced us to the buffet area.

The buffet annexe was set out with starters of chicken tikka, chicken and vegetable pakoras, onion bhaji, breads and popadums. With my back to the main courses and an empty plate it was difficult to remain



**Help yourself to starters**



*'With my back to the main courses and an empty plate it was difficult to remain circumspect'*

circumspect, but I did my best, and returned to the table with a small – well, medium – sample of each. I was impressed with the coconut and lime pickle that I discovered tucked in with the salad dishes. It had a lovely salty/sweet tang and nicely complemented the crispy batter on the pakoras. The chicken pakoras were particularly good.

With a fresh plate and an appetite suitably whetted we returned to inspect the main courses. A variety of choices from chicken tikka masala to lamb vindaloo meant that all tastes had been catered for. I felt it my duty to try a few. Between us we chose lamb dupiaza, chicken pasanda and chicken biryani with bombay aloo and pilau rice, all of which were most satisfying. Oh, and the vegetarian option that day was an aubergine dish, which, I admit, we managed to fit in as well. The salad bar was colourful and comprehensive; a few morsels from here managed to find their

way onto our plates, making us feel slightly more virtuous.

Needless to say, there was little room left for pudding. However, if a job's worth doing... A compromise of one dish to share, with rice pudding, creamy coconut balls and fresh melon, allowed us to do the job well. For those with larger appetites there were plenty of ice-cream dishes and fresh fruit to choose from.

During the evening there was a gentle flow of diners to the restaurant and the atmosphere was relaxed, yet busy. Sometimes, when these 'need-a-restaurant' days fall early in the working week, even the most successful venue feels slightly morgue-like, so it was a pleasant change to have the opportunity to people-watch while we ate. For those who prefer to dash and go there is a full takeaway menu and delivery service within five miles.

The chef at The Balti House is Shaheb Uddin, a smiling, unassuming man, who was trained by Solman Farsi, the owner of this and the renowned Anokaa, the successful sister restaurant. We enjoyed his menu and returned home ready to face any universal truth that hadn't yet materialised. **V**

**Our meal, without drinks, cost £8.95 per person**



**The salad bar, with coconut and lime pickle**