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Dining fit for the Raj

Moira Dinning had been past *The Days of the Raj* many times, but had never ventured in. Now she is wondering just how she had overlooked it all this time. WORDS: NICOLLE THOMPSON

The Days of the Raj is in quite a prominent location, yet because of its first-floor location it is somehow easy to miss. Until you try it that is. This immaculate and friendly restaurant serves up a host of Indian dishes, cooked in the traditional way, and employs chefs who use knowledge and expertise to cleverly combine spices and flavours rather than relying on standard curry powders.

The menu is incredibly impressive, but if you still cannot find exactly what you want they will happily prepare it for you wherever possible. Mind you, just the Raj Specialities alone offer so much choice that I imagine special requests are rarely needed!

My husband and I called in one Monday evening, to be warmly greeted by our host, Amin, who looked after us all evening.

If first impressions count, this one did it for me. Everything was pristine - from the coordinated carpets and curtains to the spotless linens and the crockery. The single fresh carnation and freesia on each table was a lovely finishing touch (as well as the 15-bulb ornate chandelier overhead!).

We sat down to poppadoms & pickles while we decided what to have. As it was a cold day outside, our waiter, Sanny, suggested a warm pot of Indian tea for me. It was delicious! In fact it was so good, I had two. My husband opted for a Kingfisher beer instead. It must have been good because he had two as well!

We decided on our starters - a *Chana La Jawab* for me and a *Mixed Kebab* for Mick.

My *Chana* was excellent - a castle of chick peas

intertwined with cabbage & onion and topped with a large green chilli. I just had to try the chilli. Daft idea as it turned out!

Mick said his *Kebab* was wonderfully different as it was in part made up with an incredibly aromatic burger which he had never seen before. I tried a bit myself and it was indeed absolutely lovely. A great twist on a classic dish.

For our mains I had opted for the *Chicken Shaslik* and Mick went for the *Nawabi Milan* - the restaurant's signature dish. I was delighted when they were served to us from a hot-plated trolley. Another lovely touch.

The *Nawabi Milan* comprised marinated pieces of chicken, lamb & king prawn cooked in the tandoor with a fairly hot sauce, ginger, onion & green peppers. It was absolutely delicious. Full of flavour and just the right amount of spice.

My *Shaslik* (one of my favourites) came with a lovely salad made up of tomato, onion and cucumber drizzled with lemon. The flavour combinations with the *Shaslik* worked marvellously.

Alongside all this we had a *Garlic & Coriander Nan* and a *Vegetable Pilao* rice which had more vegetables in it than any vegetable pilao we had seen before! I also noted that the nan stayed soft and fluffy throughout and did not dry out as some tend to do.

At the end of the meal we were given lovely hot towels and then brought not just a pot of coffee, with cream, but a tray of sweets! There were After Eights, a selection of fruit gums, little red & white hearts and jelly sweets as well as the little Indian mouth-fresheners that I can never remember the name of!



The attention to detail had been incredible from beginning to end, from the welcome we received, through the presentation of the food, to the little touches which made a huge difference.

What may make Days of the Raj even more enticing is the fact it still manages to do some great offers.

They do an early bird menu Monday to Thursday (eat-in only) between 6pm and 7pm, where you can get a four-course meal, from a selected menu, for just £10.95. There are also Sunday and Thursday night specials, between selected hours (see the website for full details).

We really did have a wonderful meal at Days of the Raj and I genuinely do wish I had visited sooner. The food was delicious and the staff could not be faulted.

No wonder it was named Best South Asian Restaurant, North of England, at the 2012 Asian Curry Awards as well as being named Caterer of the Year at the 2012 BCA Awards. 🏆



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www.thedaysoftheraj.co.uk