



Spice up weekday eating

Chris Owens's expectations are surpassed following a midweek visit to The Days Of The Raj in Gosforth.

WE ALL need to spice up our midweek dining options with a good curry occasionally, and The Days Of The Raj in Gosforth proved it had just that recipe to heat up a chilly Thursday evening for me and my dining companions.

As you immediately know you're in a superior curry house by the quality of advice and service you receive and it's rarely bettered by the welcome and attentiveness of owner Mr Rahman and his staff at The Days Of The Raj.

As you ascend to the first floor dining room, just off the Great North Road in Gosforth, I'm sure the array of awards on proud display catch the eye of most visitors; two of the most recent include the prestigious BCA Awards 2012 Caterer of the Year and Best South Asian Restaurant for the North of England category at the 2012 Asian Curry Awards.

I can often feel overwhelmed when handed a menu in an Indian restaurant but thankfully our friendly waiter was on hand to guide me through the amazing selection, ranging from Kashmiri, Malayan, Sri Lankan-inspired dishes as well as the expected repertoire of classics.

The Raj specialities (starting at £8.45) and selection of fish dishes provide something a little different if you're feeling more adventurous. But it seemed set to be an evening of comforts for me and my group as we all ordered our much-loved classic kommas and bhunas, while I couldn't pass on my curry – tikka lamb madras (£8.15).

We also ordered portions of vegetable and mushroom pilau and a selection of naan to accompany our mains and on the waiter's enthusiastic recommendation three of us also opted for the tandoori special mixed kebab (£4.50) to start.

We made short work of the poppadoms while quenching the thirst of a hard day's work with Cobra beers before the mixed kebabs arrived. The delicious lamb kofta, succulent tandoori chicken pieces and a light crispy onion bhaji didn't disappoint.

One advantage of my compulsion to order madras when having an Indian meal is that I know what makes a good one. When my main arrived, I could tell by the rich colour and silky consistency that I was on to a winner. In the past, I've found that tikka lamb can often be on the chewy side but the hefty chunks were tender while retaining the robust flavours you'd expect in a quality cut of lamb. The gravy in which the meat has stewed was smooth and had a strong yet gentle heat created by the delicate combination of spices you only ever find produced in the most experienced Indian kitchens. The consensus around the table was that I wasn't alone in my thinking. The lamb bhuna (£7.60), in particular that one of my party allowed me to try impressed my taste buds enough to promise it to myself upon my next visit.

Just before we made our way back out into the chilly evening, my attention was drawn to the early bird offer (£10.95) available Monday to Thursdays and The Royal & Special Banquet Menus (£12.95 and £13.95, respectively).

I've definitely found the destination in which to remedy my mid-week culinary boredom.

The Days of the Raj is located at Harewood House, 49 Great North Road, Gosforth, Newcastle, NE3 2HH. Opening hours are Monday-Saturday 6pm-11.30pm, Sunday and Bank Holidays, 6pm-11.00pm. For further information and reservations call (0191) 284 9555, email: bookingatraj@hotmail.com or visit www.thedaysoftheraj.co.uk