

FIZZ OF LIFE BLOG

LIFESTYLE, FOOD AND TRAVEL IN LONDON, BAKU AND ELSEWHERE

AMAYA, KNIGHTSBRIDGE

KNIGHTSBRIDGE LONDON LONDON RESTAURANTS UK

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It's Curry, Jim, But Not As We Know It

Michelin starred Amaya, in a little passage off Motcomb Street, is, without a shadow of a doubt, one of London's most chic and sophisticated Indian restaurants. Forget flock wallpaper and lurid pictures of elephants, here it's all about a contemporary vibe, dark and very softly lit. As such, it has the reputation of being one of the capital's most romantic restaurants, though it might not be an ideal choice for a first date because it's so popular, buzzy and noisy, that there's no chance of whispered sweet nothings being heard by your paramour. Tables are comfortably well spaced out but even so, you have to be of good of voice to conduct a meaningful conversation.



Amaya, Halkin Arcade, Knightsbridge



Amaya, Knightsbridge

Be forewarned, this is no curry house where you might pitch up after a beery Friday night. For a start, it is imperative that you book well in advance to have any hope of a table but, more pertinently, any desire for onion bhajis is guaranteed to be thwarted and you won't find your favourite Vindaloo here. The menu is mouthwatering, for sure, but essentially this is top of the range western food, seasoned with Indian spices and cooked in one of three subcontinental styles, Tandoor in a hot clay oven, Sigrri over a coal flame, or Tawa seared or griddled on a very hot plate, all of which can be watched from your table with a view of the open kitchen at the back of the restaurant.



Amaya, Knightsbridge. Open kitchen

Amaya

Amaya takes its inspiration from an age-old approach to dining. Traditionally Indian gourmets would graze their way through a succession of grilled delicacies and then finish with a single grandstand dish – a special curry, and a rich biryani.

We invite you to try this for yourself.
Choose six to eight dishes and some bread
(the waiter can guide you).

All kebabs are cooked to order and will be served the moment they are ready to eat, so expect a gentle flow of dishes, and graze your way through a memorable meal.

Chef: Karunesh Khanna

Indian grazing at Amaya

The Lovely Husband, as always my steadfast dinner companion, and I, chose the regular Tasting Menu to keep things simple and get a good overview at the same time. After all, what can be better than a selection of tastes recommended by the chef?

Tasting Menu

£50 food, £80 food & wine
(to be ordered by the entire table)

Crispy Cabbage & Noodle Salad
Rose Chicken Tikka

*The Crossing Pinot Gris, Awatere Valley, South Island,
New Zealand 2014*

Char Grilled Fillet of Seabass
Goats Cheese & Yoghurt Kebab
Naan

Briccotondo Arneis, Fontanafredda, Piemonth, Italy 2014

Wild Venison Seekh Kebab
Grilled Asparagus

Villa de Fiori, Primitivo, Puglia, Italy 2015

Chicken Biryani
Pomegranate & Boondi Raita

Passion in a Chocolate Box

Amaya. Tasting Menu.

Our first three courses were beyond exquisite. The Crispy Cabbage and Noodle Salad was fresh and crunchy, the pomegranate seeds, nuts, bamboo shoots, finely shredded cabbage and crispy noodles a perfect combo of texture and flavour, leaving us hungry for more. The Rose Chicken Tikka was the tenderest, juiciest I have ever tasted, a real melt in the mouth moment, with a good kick of tandoor spices elevating essentially boring chicken to all new pinnacles of taste; the Chargrilled Seabass, served on a banana leaf, the crowning glory in its mindblowing succulence and subtly layered spices. These were the height of culinary bliss, of deliciousness exceeding all expectations, the stuff that dreams are made of.



Crispy Cabbage and Noodle Salad at Amaya



Rose Chicken Tikka at Amaya



Chargrilled Fillet of Seabass at Amaya

The Goats Cheese and Yoghurt Kebab were not so much kebab, as little fried mushy cakes, light, tangy and tasty, but somehow, so very un-Indian, that, delectable as they were, they seemed out of place in this line up. Still, they went down without a murmur of dissent.



Goats Cheese and Yoghurt Kebab at Amaya

The joy of eating Naan lies in that buttery sponginess, that allows for getting down and dirty with curries and sauces, the tearing and mopping and sensuality of eating with your hands. Here at Amaya, I found them

disappointing. They were far less doughy and much more crispy than expected and, although they came accompanied by some nice enough condiments, they were bereft of anything saucy to revel in. In my naïve expectation of further delights yet to come, I prematurely ordered another batch at a whopping £4.50, which, however, never met their match and remained redundant.



Naan at Amaya



And Condiments

They, in turn, were followed by Wild Venison Seekh Kebab, two lightly spiced cigars of venison mince filled with, what I assume, was sweet potato puree. Nice if you like mince but wasted on me, as I am not a fan.



Wild Venison Seekh Kebab

Four firm grilled spears of green asparagus, enhanced with a rich curryish kind of hollandaise, made for a good contrast to previous dishes but, again, for my tastebuds, a little too European in their aim.



Grilled Asparagus at Amaya

Finally, the Chicken Biryani with a Pomegranate and Boondi Raita. Ah, now I have been spoilt for life by a Biryani I had on a recent trip to Oman, which was truly the food of the Gods. Sadly it made Amaya's version a little bland and unremarkable in comparison. The Raita of thick yoghurt and barely any taste of the chickpea boondi lacked tartness and liquidity to give the all important zingy lift to its Hindi rice partner. Such a shame.



Chicken Biryani and Pomegranate & Boondi Raita at Amaya

Neither the Lovely Husband nor myself are keen on chocolatey desserts, so we were very kindly offered a cherry topped cheesecake instead. The small slice came prettily presented, with two plump and juicy black cherries and the now so ubiquitous edible flowers for decoration, a yummy morsel of a finale.



Cherry Cheesecake at Amaya

Amaya in Hindu and Arabic is a girls' name meaning Night Rain. Anyone who has ever lived in the tropics, will appreciate the refreshing qualities of a much longed for shower at night, breaking the stifling heat of day and painting nature with a lush and colourful new palette. The very same can be said for Amaya, the restaurant. It brings an exciting and different slant to Indian cuisine in London, with its often unexpected take on classic dishes. There's nothing sticky or cloying about the food here, nothing heavy or challenging to digest, it's all elegantly spiced and beautifully cooked, caressing the discerning palate. If you're doubtful about conventional Indian food and enjoy a high gourmet experience, Amaya offers a fabulous symphony of Indian inspired European adapted cooking which will ring your every sensory bell. If, on the other hand, you are a bit of a Luddite, as I am, and you relish the thought of a mundane hot and wet curry, that gets your mucous membranes going, and that is eaten enthusiastically Indian street style with your chapatti, paratha or naan in your hand and oil dripping down your chin, then Amaya may just be a little too refined for you. Nonetheless, I had an excellent meal here, which made a very pleasant change from the usual.



Our bill at Amaya, Knightsbridge

Our bill came to £163.69, including a £37 bottle of very nice Indian Sauvignon Blanc, a second portion of naan, an Americano coffee, service charge and VAT, which, though by no means cheap, seems acceptable for superbly high quality food in a Michelin starred restaurant in London. Service was highly professional, discreet and friendly.

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