

DINING | THE GUIDE



The taste of India

Kohinoor Sahota finds there's a curry for every taste in the capital

They say that London is the best place outside of India to try Indian cuisine.

It was in 2001 that chicken tikka masala was declared Britain's national dish by then Labour Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and Indian food became a staple in the British diet. The cuisine has become so popular, there is now even a National Curry Week (9-15 Oct), and an Indian restaurant to suit all tastes – and budgets.

It's back to school with **Baluchi** (p. 66) at the recently opened Lalit Hotel. Located in London Bridge, the building used to be a grammar school. The menu continues the theme: starters are called Beginning – Term 1, while the desserts are labelled Term Break – School Holidays. Do not fear, the menu is not strict: there are traditional dishes such as butter chicken, but also quirky ones like mango and coconut naan. With its high-end service – a holder is offered for your bag, so it does not touch the floor – this upmarket venue, which is decorated with chandeliers and dark wood panels, is a class act.

Curry champion sisters Camellia and Namita Panjabi revolutionised Indian cuisine from a post-pub curry takeaway to sit-down meals. Created in 1989, MW Eat (The Real Indian Food Group) boasts an impressive list of critically acclaimed restaurants. **Chutney Mary** (p. 66) recently launched a weekend brunch menu with English breakfast classics given an Indian twist, for example eggs Benedict comes with green chillies and ginger. Drinks are just as inventive, as the watermelon martini comes with a tap attached to the melon that you can turn yourself to fill up your glass.

If you're after Michelin-starred Indian food, **Amaya** (p. 66), located in Belgravia, has an open grill kitchen, and serves seafood and grilled meats and vegetables. After a quick business lunch? The set meals have six tasting portions for £26. Step back in time to a period of colonial clubs in India at the Michelin-starred **Gymkhana** (p. 66). There are sharing dishes, featuring guinea fowl, goat and duck, that are not commonly found on Indian menus.

Lokhandwala's Indian tapas has a distinctly international feel – try the achari English asparagus and vepudutaco with radish or the Indian Sunday poussin roast. The drink's menu is a fun mix, with favourites such as turmeric almond milk latte and aloo Bhukhara smoothie, while the cocktails include Holi (inspired by the Festival of Colours) and Viceroy (influenced by the British armed forces' love of cognac).

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Top to bottom: sharing plates and counter dining at Lokhandwala; watermelon martini at Chutney Mary; a dish at Baluchi

