

THE HANDBOOK

We Review Chutney Mary Brunch



by ***Emily Gray*** | *Posted on 16th November 2017*



What? A stunning Indian restaurant serving up traditional dishes with a clever, contemporary twist.

New? No – you may remember its previous incarnation in Chelsea, where it enjoyed a gaudy couple of decades from 1990 until 2015, at which point it moved to its current location in Mayfair.

Where? In the heart of grand, old St. James's Street – on the vast site where Marco Pierre White's Luciano's used to be. 73 St James's Street, Mayfair, SW1A 1PH, www.chutneymary.com

On The Menu: One of the first restaurants to put a modern spin on Indian cuisine, Chutney Mary is still pushing out powerful flavours, riotous colours and total explosions of taste. It is open for lunch and dinner – and now has a special weekend brunch menu (created in response to customer demand). They are passionate about provenance at Chutney Mary, using the best, locally sourced ingredients where they can (their eggs, for instance, are rich and delicious Burford Browns). The menu is large and innovative – but have no fear, plenty of knowledgeable waiters are on hand with excellent advice. Think griddled scallops in Mangalorean sauce, chargrilled Jaipur lamb, Tandoori whole lobster and green Goa chicken curry, accompanied by a range of vegetarian options that are herbed and spiced to perfection, finished off with puddings of exquisite sweetness.

The Look: It's hard to get the décor right in a space as dramatic and large as this one. Thrilling, well-chosen pieces of art vie for attention here with a bad patterned carpet, textured, silvery walls and dazzling but dodgy light fittings. The loos in the basement, however, are to die for – expensively appointed with delicious hand-wash to boot.

The clientele is a right old melting pot. There were Arabs with shopping bags aplenty; off-duty bankers; young couples in the know; Euro glamourpusses sporting sunglasses and Gucci trainers and Chanel-clad Americans taking out their grown-up children.

Setting the tone for this motley collection was a brilliant pianist who tinkled away on the ivories throughout our meal. He is there at brunch every Saturday and Sunday, merrily bashing out such favourites as “You Are Always on My Mind”, “Hotel California” and “Piano Man”.

What We Ate: Talent and love oozes out of the kitchen at Chutney Mary. Everything – or almost everything – is beautifully presented, packed full of flavour and subtly rendered. I was there specifically to try the brunch menu. That meant taking down some of the richest, most aromatic, best scrambled eggs I have ever tasted – and the accompanying garlic Naan fingers weren't bad either. A plate of zingy lamb sliders slipped down a treat. Made in-house each day, the paneer – with its arresting tamarind glaze and dusting of sesame seeds – melted in the mouth. But the winner – odd though it may sound – was Mopla Egg Masala, a dish of soft-boiled eggs covered with a thin, crispy breadcrumb, nestling in a ginger masala sauce. They have to be tasted to be believed: smooth, spicy, flavoursome heaven. Only the salmon kedgeree was disappointing; it was overly smokey and otherwise surprisingly under-seasoned. Soon, it was time for pudding. Oh, the puddings. The date and walnut kulfi (a traditional Indian ice cream) was, simply, outrageous – as was its gold leaf detailing. A crème brulee of stunning depth and yellowness (thanks, presumably, to those Burford Browns), partnered by an excellent pistachio ice cream, will live long in the memory.

What We Drank: Everyone has a view on what to drink with Indian food. At Chutney Mary, with its excellent wine list, irresistible cocktails and range of beers, you can drink what you please. We ploughed straight in with a cocktail apiece. My Saffron Martini alone was worth returning for. I never wanted it to end... My friend got stuck into a delightful, zesty, spiced Old Fashioned. We could happily have laid waste to any number of cocktails that the delightful, inventive head barman put our way but we pulled ourselves together and nursed a perfect Chablis instead.

Go With: Any hungry person you know. Or your parents – who will chuckle at the very thought of eating curry in St. James's, while the quality and inventiveness of the menu will blow their minds.

Final Word: Go for brunch, lunch or dinner. Have a party in one of the gorgeous private rooms downstairs; the staff members are so charming and amenable, it'll be the easiest hosting you've ever done. Or – call me radical – just go for drinks. The stylish Pukka Bar at Chutney Mary and its exhilarating cocktail list would give any Mayfair watering hole a run for its money.