



# Fabulous Food

I have driven past **The Days of the Raj** in Gosforth many times, and have always said "we must try it" to the lovely husband, and so eventually we booked a table for a Friday night in October. By the time we came out, some two and a half hours later, I was a convert, and mad with myself for never having been before!

From the outside, it is a very unassuming building, but as soon as you enter the restaurant on the first floor, you have a bit of a "wow" moment. Fabulous sparkling crystal chandeliers, a wonderful tall tiffany style standing lamp, and gorgeous fresh flowers on top of crisp linen, an exceptionally good first impression.

There was a steady flow of diners throughout the evening, and the phone buzzed all night with people ordering take aways to either collect or be delivered. Owner Aminur Rahman, had greeted us warmly and shown us to our table, whilst his lovely staff took the calls, laughing and joking with regulars and new customers alike. The atmosphere was sophisticated yet homely, and we settled down with the lavish leather-bound menus to make our choices.

Whilst we were deliberating, we ordered a couple of poppadoms with a selection of pickles. I love a good poppadum, and these snapped crisply and were tasty, so my first box had a big tick in it! A good selection of lime pickle, onion salad, raita and mango chutney accompanied them as we crunched our way through.

The Days of the Raj prides itself on authentic Indian dishes cooked in a traditional manner, and the vast and varied menu covers well known

dishes, as well as a myriad of Chef special dishes, stating that if something you like is not on the menu, then just ask, and they will prepare it for you. I was struck by the explanation of the food on the first page of the menu - "Indian cuisine is a subtle combination of exotic flavours achieved by the centuries old craft of blending spices from all four corners of the country". This simple sentence seemed to convey everything that we sometimes struggle to put into words.

But, to the food...

Chris had chosen *Mixed Kebab*, a combination of Sheek Kebab, Shami Kebab and Onion Bhaji. The presentation was faultless with a fresh salad. Both the Sheek and Shami kebabs were nicely spiced, and the onion bhaji with its fluffy light batter, lifted the spicy notes from the meaty kebabs. He thoroughly enjoyed this, and devoured every mouthful. I had decided on *King Prawn Butterfly* and ooh it was good. A huge king prawn had been butterflied and coated with fine breadcrumbs before being quickly fried. A rich tamarind sauce was drizzled on the plate, and the deep heat of this was sublime with the juicy prawn and crisp salad. I've never had tamarind sauce before, it was quite a revelation, and when I asked Mr Rahman about it, he smiled and told me that it a secret recipe of head chef Dilwar Hossain. Delicious!

I had already made my mind up during the day that I wanted a Shaslik dish, and decided that *Lamb Shaslik* was to be my choice. It arrived on a sizzling platter with huge chunks of onion, pepper and tomato. It almost looked too good to eat. The moist and tender lamb had been coated with subtle spices and it was indescribably good. The meat fell to bits when the fork touched it. It had a depth of flavour which hit every taste bud in my mouth and elicited little "mmm's" of pleasure. Another dish of fresh salad complimented it perfectly. Meanwhile, Chris decided to go for something that he hadn't had before - *Tikka Saag*, a dish of medium strength, rather dry, and cooked with spinach, which I must confess looked very good, so I did have to try a little bit. As with all Indian meals, sharing is the best policy! The tandoori chicken pieces were plump, tasty, expertly seasoned and rather special. I did enjoy the flavour that the spinach brought



to the overall dish. Again here a quote from the menu would seem to be appropriate - "Rooted in the soil of Eastern India, our specialities are made in our Restaurant exactly as they are in our home". It was wonderful! A side dish of Keema Pliau Rice, Garlic Nan rounded off the meal to perfection. The rice was fluffy, full of minced meat, vegetables and was lovely, and the nan had just the right amount of garlic.

Although we had demolished nearly all of our main courses, and relaxing with a hot towel for a few minutes we just had to have a dessert to share. The dessert menu comprised of indulgent puddings that were visually exciting, and after much debate chose *The Raj Pot*, a lovely ceramic pot, which revealed, when you opened the lid, creamy toffee ice cream, topped with chewy toffee balls. Ooh really yummy. This would have been a perfect end, BUT one of the lovely waiters smiled, and brought a club shaped tray of sweets! HOW can you not have a couple of dolly mixtures, or a couple of jelly beans, or an After Eight mint. It is physically impossible.

No wonder The Days of The Raj has so many regulars, we thoroughly enjoyed everything, the restaurant itself, the fabulous food, and Mr Rahman and his lovely staff. Try it for yourself, either a set meal, a takeaway, a special, whichever, just take my word for it, and see you again there very soon!

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