



Butter roti and naah with dal Bukhara and murgh tikka masala. PICS/ASHISH RAJE

A fare result

A new Indian restaurant in Andheri doesn't knock our socks off, but isn't disappointing either

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FOOD REVIEW

FOOD/GOOD
AMBIENCE/BUZZING
SERVICE/EXCELLENT
COST/FAIR
VERDICT/☆☆☆☆

WHAT is the single most popular desi dish across the world? The answer undoubtedly is chicken tikka masala or, as the British call it, "chicken teeka masyala". Be it in dubious "Indian" restaurants in the UK that are actually run by Bangladeshis or similar establishments in America, Europe and the rest of the world, this food item is so ubiquitous that it's almost synonymous with our cuisine once we leave these shores. But here's the thing. Chicken tikka masala apparently has as little to do with authentic Indian food as a beef steak has to do with fare from Gujarat. A popular theory has it that the dish was in fact invented in a restaurant in Glasgow. There, in the 1960s, a patron complained that his chicken tikka — a kebab made in a tandoor — was too dry. So, the chef racked his brains and came up with an idea. He added canned tomato soup, some spices and yoghurt to the tikka, and served the dish back to the customer in a gravy avatar. The latter lapped it up. The chef realised that he'd hit upon a winning recipe. And thus was born the chicken tikka masala, making its way from Britain's curry houses to places as far off as Japan and, ironically, even India.

Those are the thoughts running through our head when we place an order for murgh tikka masala at Mulk, a new Indian restaurant in Andheri. But first, a word of caution about getting there. It's best to turn on your GPS to find the place, considering its nondescript location in the nether regions of Lokhandwala. That's what we do, and are told on reaching that there's a 10-minute wait for a table. So, the pleasant man-

ager seats us in an adjoining bar area that's separate from the main restaurant. And we have hardly had four sips of a Kingfisher beer (₹180) when she returns to inform us that a table is ready. We thus make our way through a connecting corridor to a space that is choc-a-bloc with service staff and families out for a Sunday dinner. They range from a mother-father duo having a meal with their daughter (we are assuming this because the girl is a spitting image of the woman) and three generations of an entire family, complete with nana-nani, chacha-chachi, mummy-papa and the bachchas.

The menu reveals itself to be an out-and-out Indian affair replete with stuff like Amritsari tawa fry machhi and rumali ghaghara chatpata. But we had decided beforehand to keep things simple. Does the place get its basics right? That's the question we want answered. So, we ask for dal Bukhara (₹330) and the tikka masala (₹450), along with butter roti (₹60) and naan (₹90) to mop those up with.

The two dishes arrive together and we try the dal first. This particular preparation is a version of the dal makhani, invented at a five-star restaurant in Delhi that it gets its name from. Black urad dal is cooked on a slow fire to give it a certain viscosity,

and the dish eschews rajma and chana that also feature in a dal makhani. But does this one sit well on our palate? Not completely, to be honest. For, it's a bit bland, and some more cream would have given it a suitably regal touch.

The murgh tikka masala, though, has the right amount of richness. Moreover, the addition of large chunks of capsicum lends it a certain sweetness that's absent from most other versions. Both the dishes together are heavy enough to fill us up before we finish them off, since we are dining with just one other companion. Hence, we ask for the bill and leave happy with the knowledge that our experience hasn't been disappointing, after all.

And that actually is our overall assessment of Mulk — the restaurant doesn't disappoint. Yes, there are a few glitches (the décor, despite being glitzy, has tacky touches). But the service is excellent. The food isn't bad. The ambience is buzzing. And the next time you decide on a family meal together, you could definitely do worse than choosing this eatery. Except, again, remember to switch your GPS on when you head out.

ON 12.15 to 3.30 pm; 7.30 pm to 12.30 pm AT Crescent Royale, Veera Desai Industrial Estate, Andheri West. CALL 33715933

☆☆☆☆EXCEPTIONAL, ☆☆☆EXCELLENT, ☆☆☆VERY GOOD, ☆☆☆GOOD, ☆☆☆AVERAGE. Mulk didn't know we were there. The Guide reviews anonymously and pays for meals



Singh is king



A haven for watermelons

A watermelon festival in Wada preceded by a ride on bikes may be exactly what you need



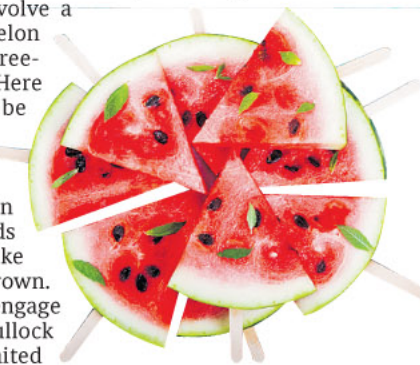
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MUST CARRY

ID proof, vehicle documents, riding gear and helmet, and reflector bibs for driving at night

SUMMER might still be taking it's time to hit the city but watermelons remain a fave go-to fruit hydrating Mumbaikars all year through. The folks at Adventure Geek, a travel company, are taking things to the next level by planning a trip to a watermelon festival in Wada this weekend. To make things more adventurous, you can ride on your bike with the group that's making a road trip out of it.

The trail will be a 180-km journey and will involve a trip to watermelon farms after a three-hour-long ride. Here participants will be served a welcome drink and breakfast. You can then head to orchards where fruits like mangoes are grown. You can also engage in games like bullock cart rides, unlimited



ON February 17, 6 am to 6 pm AT Sange Village, Wada (meeting point: Fountain Hotel, National Highway 8, near Varsava Bridge) CALL 9904675388 COST ₹1,500



Bikers make their way to Sange village in Wada

Narrating tales of love

Listen to people share eight unusual love stories at a Bandra venue

WHAT'S ON TONIGHT?

SOME love stories have more to them than the usual boy-meets-girl plot. Grab the opportunity to listen to some such tales of romance, as people share their filmy, sad or outright hilarious narratives of finding love. Kahaaniya, a story-telling show hosted by Tape A Tale, unravels eight extraordinary tales of being smitten instantly or developing unexpected feelings over time. The theme of the event is Jars Of Love, so bring along your near and dear



Navaldeep Singh narrates a story ones and enjoy a night of sweet, heart-warming stories.

FROM February 12, 8.30 pm to 10.30 pm AT The Cuckoo Club, St Andrews Road, Bandra West. CALL 9970437895 COST ₹299

The Guide Team