



Spice Indian restaurant, Kildare



Spice's king prawn amrisari

Spice

Main street, Kildare Town
Tel: +353 (0)45 520 455
www.spicerestaurant.net

Spice Indian restaurant in Wexford town first came to my attention last summer when an Indian friend who was holidaying in the area gave it a rave review. With chefs from the same region of Kerala in South India as her family, it sounded like she had stumbled upon a gem with authentic Indian cooking that reminded her of home. I was envious to have missed out on the experience but felt that the two hour drive to Wexford was a bit much for the sake of a curry, albeit a good one.

Imagine my delight when I recently learned that the people behind Spice in Wexford, Richard and Emma Lett, had opened a second branch in the more accessible town of Kildare. When I say accessible, save for the odd trip to the outlet village, I had never been to the town of Kildare before. Based on first impressions, there didn't seem to be much to it. Despite being a Saturday night, the streets were empty and there seemed to be little to recommend the place save for the bright and welcoming lights of Spice, located above Cunningham's pub.

The restaurant itself was also relatively empty – not altogether surprising given it's a new kid on an old block. We were warmly received by our host for the evening before settling into the soft couches at a window seat. The room is basic enough, and might benefit from better lighting or a few splashes of colour. In any case, the long menu soon held our attention.

Our friendly and knowledgeable host quickly informed us that yes, the chefs in Kildare were the same ones as the Wexford branch and all

hailed from Kerala. She also mentioned that the early bird was running all night, and great value it offered too with three courses for €24.95 and two for €22.95.

While my companion opted for the à la carte, I stuck with the early bird. For starters, we both wanted to share the house platter for two, which was listed on both menus albeit with a few differences. "That's no problem, I'll look after you," came the reply when we queried

whether this would be possible. As well as the usual fare of crispy onion bhajis, homemade vegetable samosas and succulent chicken tikka and vegetable pakoras from the early bird platter, we were treated to marinated prawns included on the à la carte. Accompanied by several sauces, the generous starter portion was perfectly executed, with the chicken tikka particularly tender and memorable.

Moving on to the second course, among the usual fare of Rogan Josh, Jalfrezi, Madras and Vindaloo dishes, there was also a more diverse range of chef's specialities on offer. It was from this selection that we chose our mains. I was delighted with my Goan fish curry of fresh sole, squid and king prawns cooked with onion, ginger and chillies. The bright yellow curry contained a generous helping of perfectly cooked fish, served medium spicy as requested.

We were pre-warned that the Kerala-style roast beef would have more of a kick to it. It was a fair warning. The stew-like beef dish cooked with black pepper and garam masala and finished with coconut milk was bursting with

meaty flavours with a lingering kick of spice. Instantly I understood my friend's 'home-cooking' reference – this was the Indian equivalent of your mammy's stew if ever there was one.

A generous portion of fragrant pilau rice fought it out for our attention with an addictive side of Aloo Jeera – fried potatoes cooked in Indian spices and chunks of tomato. A large portion of thick and doughy garlic naan was the

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only disappointment – I would have preferred it thin and crispy.

With more food than we could manage in one sitting, in a very welcome gesture our host kindly offered to wrap up the remainder for us to take home.

Of course there was still dessert to try, for research purposes if nothing else. I usually don't hold out much hope for the third course in Asian restaurants. On too many occasions I have been left disappointed upon the presentation of a card of pre-made desserts, complete with pictures, following an otherwise excellent meal. However, Spice are all about catering to Irish tastes and this held true for dessert.

An apple and almond tartlet with crème Anglaise and vanilla ice cream and a citrus lemon tart with fresh cream were just two of the options on the main menu. Sticking with the early bird, I went for the warm chocolate and walnut brownie served with vanilla ice cream. With expectations low, I was pleasantly surprised by the homemade quality of the moist brownie complemented by a generous



Spice's chilli fried squid

crunch of walnuts. It may not have been Indian but it tasted good and proved to be a satisfying end to a thoroughly enjoyable meal. The experience was made all the sweeter when our bill arrived. A good feed like that is hard to come by and even more difficult for under €65. Kildare Town might not be quite the trek Wexford is, but the experience left me wishing that every town in Ireland could have a local Indian of the calibre of Spice, or at least my own.

Open: 5pm – 10.30pm daily

Orla Murphy

We loved The excellent and accommodating service, the great value and the consistently top notch food

We spent €63.80 for a starter platter for two, two mains, one pilau rice, one portion of potatoes, one portion of garlic naan, one dessert, one coffee and two large Cobra beers

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