

Tandoori flavour

...with emphasis on healthy eating

by **Gerry Choo**

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SAFFRON Bistro is an eatery owned by two ladies with a mission to marry traditional *Moghul* cuisine with healthy eating.

This means that traditional spices used are more subtle so as not to overwhelm the natural flavours of the ingredients.

It also means a moderation of the use of ghee (clarified butter), which is usually found in Indian food.

The menu is presented in two parts. The first offers very much what one would expect in a North Indian restaurant, with tandoori meats and breads.

However, what sets Saffron Bistro apart is a contemporary menu that offers items such as pan-seared, lightly-spiced *foie gras* and crispy softshell crab with cabbage salad and homemade curry mayonnaise.

To begin, we had the tandoori chicken and the *zaffrani machli*, saffron fish cakes.

The tandoori chicken was traditionally spiced, but at a level which allowed the natural flavour of the meat to come through.

The meat was tender and juicy, having been cooked at a high temperature to seal the moisture in. The *tandoor*, or traditional oven, imparted a smoky charcoal flavour to the meat.

The fish cakes were a delight. Moist and flavourful, they were made from choice Pacific Dory and were enhanced by a delightful homemade curry mayonnaise with a hint of fresh mango.

For the main course, we had a cross-section of traditional offerings - *rogan josh* (lamb curry), *murgh markhani* (butter

chicken) and the all-time favourite *palak paneer* (pureed spinach with Indian cheese).

The *rogan josh* was a decent version of a traditional recipe, made healthier by a moderate use of ghee.

The butter chicken, despite its name, owed its flavour to yogurt rather than butter. Its tenderness was enhanced by a creamy, slightly smoky sauce.

The *pakak panner* was exquisite. The usual bitterness of the spinach was set off by the taste and texture of the *paneer*, an Indian cottage cheese.

The piece de la resistance was the saffron lamb rib. Braised in a subtle combination of spices, the ribs had been cooked to perfection. The meat fell off the bone easily but did not disintegrate into a stringy mess. This was accompanied by *naan* and saffron rice.

For dessert, we had homemade halva (carrot sweet) and a handmade lychee sorbet. The marsala tea with aromatic cardamom, cloves and cinnamon capped it all off beautifully.

