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TIMES FOOD GUIDE

IT'S GOOD FOR YOU

This Iskcon venture serves quality vegetarian fare in an elegant setting

Priya Bala

It's called Higher Taste. Because the food is sattvik, designed to purify and enhance health and happiness, as opposed to foods that induce tamas or denseness and evoke the baser instincts. There is no garlic, onion or over-spicing in the Higher Taste kitchen. But do not think for a moment that the food lacks flavour or zest. My meal left me utterly impressed — with the freshness of the ingredients and the flavours shining through.

Like the rest of the temple complex, the restaurant has a quiet elegance and simplicity about it. It's

on two levels, and downstairs, where the sunlight pours in through the large glass panes, is for the buffet. The a la carte menu is served upstairs on dark-topped tables with stylish table settings.

It was a warm afternoon when I arrived there and I had kesar shikanji to start with. For starters, it was inji vadai, masala vadas spiked with ginger flakes, and plain paniyaram, the little dumplings fried in a dimpled paniyaram pan, crispy outside and soft and fl u f f y at the centre. These Tamil Nadu snacks

were fabulous, with tomato and coconut chutneys.

Then we moved to the curries. I ordered a thakkali paruppu masiyal, moong dal cooked with tomatos and gently spiced; it was home-style and delightful. The mangai kilangu thodukari was a splendid blend of potatoes and sharp raw mango. The zafrani kofta is for when you want something a little rich — perfectly wrought ovals of paneer in a cashew-saffron gravy. The subz e khansama — a medley of vegetables in mild masala — was all crunchy and nutritious. I also tasted from the buffet a dish of rossogolla in corn gravy which was surprising and good.

For accompaniments we had ragi dosa and the HT special dosa, both greasefree and wholesome.

There was rice to follow — an intriguing thakkali vetrilai sadam, tomato rice with shredded betel leaf, and arisi paruppu sadam. The latter was a runny pongal, with a peppery masala and lashings of ghee which, I suspect, was the reason for its

amazing flavour.

The Higher Taste elaneer payasam is fabulous and I enjoyed also the amirtha vadai which were like giant paal paniyaram.

The buffet, available for both lunch and dinner, is priced at Rs 330 and offers a superlative range; no tired-looking food and recycling here. A la carte meal for two would cost about Rs 900.

Service is spot on. A visit to the temple followed by a meal at Higher Taste could well be a taste of soul food.

Higher Taste, Iskcon Temple & Cultural Complex Chord Road, Bangalore 10 Phone 22766501

RATING: FOOD 3.5 SERVICE 3.75 DECOR 3.75

(5) Excellent (4) Very good (3) Good (2) Average (1) Poor

Tiranga Paneer Tikka

Zafrani Kofta

Kaikari Saatham