

The Delightful Dilli Experience



As soon as I took a step inside 'Dilli 32', I had one less thing to worry about—Delhi's scorching summer... the restaurant has an imperial and majestic aura to it, which calmed me within seconds. Dilli 32 at 'The Leela Convention Hotel' not only serves Awadhi cuisine rather celebrates and takes pride in it...

Words and Images By Amitesh Gautam



The first thing we were served was a 'Chilled cucumber mocktail' which definitely cooled me down even more and it did to me what the F5 button does to a computer. Yet another point scored against Delhi's heat.

Before I could start with menu I requested Chef Ashwini to give me a tour of his playing field. The Chef showed me his kitchen, also I had the first seat experience of watching him surgically prepare all the dishes and in the mean while I had also come to know about a few million dollar secrets of the 'Lucknowi cuisine' and its first cousin 'Awadhi cuisine'.

Talking of specials they have a unique hand wash ritual for the guests, Persian style surahis are used to pour water over, and the water drips from the palms over lovely looking rose petals a visual delight indeed. This has by far been the most ceremonial experience that I've had at washing my hands.

My taste buds smiled as I took a bite of the soft and tender 'Chatpati Machi' (spicy fish), the lentil chutney complimented all the flavours of the fish. 'Nukti kebab', a dice of lamb marinated with green papaya was intriguing at first, it had the perfect interplay of not only the ingredients but also the temperature. By the time I had finished the 'Arbi ki shammi', butterly and crispy 'Bhunna Paneer Tikka' and the aromatic 'Shahi Galawat ke kebab' I was full.

Before the main course I decided to take a walk through the restaurant, and at every step I was surprised and had rushes of nostalgia. Placed on top of a 'Sandoor' (safe box) was a wooden case which housed an array of spices such as black pepper, cinnamon sticks, and various other indigenous herbs. The 'Silwatta' lying muted next to the spice case gave an air of mystique to the restaurant. This was such a rarity in the digital age, it made me wonder how far the homo-sapiens have come.

This is the beauty and magnificence of 'Dilli32' it's a league above gastronomy its time travel.

While I was still searching for answers to life and its meaning and purpose looking at the fine collection of spirits from across the globe, I intercepted a message in morse-code from my stomach it said "Ready for the main-course".

The Chef who had by now showed how rooted and traditional he was with his starters had his innovative cap for the main-course. And with the 'Dum-aaloo Bhojpuri' served along with the 'Kachi mirch ka panner' and the smoky 'Murgh Pasanda' my plate was beaming with resplendence. But the clear winner here was the tender 'Nehari Gosht'. Another out of the box thing to look forward to is, the 'Shakahaari Kheechra' a dish prepared using lentils and green veggies. It was a complete stunner how this humble vegetarian dish was neck to neck with the likes of slow cooked mutton and finely minced chicken... one bite followed another—all I wished for was another stomach and digestion to happen at two times the speed.

I was surprised with the dessert the most. I mean how can something so sweet and smooth be possibly made with a green chili? I was initially hesitant about it but all that vanished and my ideas had transformed completely with the first spoon of the 'Mirch ka halwa'. The only other use I had known of a green chili was at the entrance of Indian homes to avoid negative frequencies. Paired with the 'Shahi Tukraa', this dessert



became the most potent combination of high voltage sweetness I've had in a long time.

'Dilli 32' has a live 'Music darbar', giving your dining experience another element to rejoice and cherish. And to add a whole new dimension it has a swimming pool overlooking the expansive Delhi skyline. But do check with the management before packing your swimming trunks.

The services offered by the wait staff are amazing and professional in every sense. Everything comes just on time, and there's nothing stopping you from enjoying the grandest of feasts served in three very well thought of meals.