



SPICE OF LIFE

PUNJABI CUISINE PACKS A PUNCH, DISCOVERS
SUNITA SHAHDADPURI

SHAYRAY Punjab was one of the first restaurants to open in Holland Village and has recently had a complete makeover. The new décor reflects the colour and vibrancy of the Punjabi royal court, though the fuchsia pink walls would also please the likes of Paris Hilton; the heavy wooden furniture with iron wrought motifs and plush upholstery is balanced by pretty, coloured lamps.

Co-owner and chef Ghazi Khanashat – who also owns and manages Middle Eastern restaurant Al Qasr down the road – and executive chef Ram Singh have introduced several new Punjabi dishes to the already extensive menu.

Punjab, the “Land of Five Rivers” in northern India, is known for its rich culture and hearty, robust cuisine, with a diverse range of vegetarian and non-vegetarian fare, from everyone’s favourite – tandoori – to briyani and kebabs. Traditionally, the cuisine calls

for a liberal use of ghee and butter, but at Shayray Punjab, the chef has adopted a healthier approach to cooking using sunflower oil, less salt, and natural food colouring without compromising on taste.

New appetisers include *pyaz te mirch de pakode* – onion and green pepper dipped in gram flour and spices, then deep-fried and served with mint chutney. I especially enjoyed *tave di fish* – cubes of red snapper marinated with gram flour, ginger, garlic, saffron and green chilli paste and served on a hot plate in authentic Punjabi style.

Besides tandoori chicken and fish tikka, you’ll be pleased with the new offering, *aatish-e murg* – chicken drumsticks marinated in a smooth blend of cashew nuts, spices and cream, and slow cooked in the tandoor for some finger-licking good eating.

What’s Indian food without curry? You’ll find a large selection featuring seafood, meats and vegetables. One of the new items is *gosht do-pyaza* – mutton and sweet bell peppers cooked in onion, tomato paste, Kashmiri chilli powder and other spices. If you like things hot and steamy, try the *murg vindaloo* – chicken and potatoes cooked in a fiery sauce of chilli paste, vinegar and tomato puree. It can be made to order according to your preference of spiciness, from mild to blow-your-mind hot.

From the vegetarian section, new additions include *shabnam-e bahar sabzi* – fresh vegetables cooked in a light tomato gravy, and *paneer taka-tak* – homemade cottage cheese with herbs and spices.

All the main courses go perfectly with a selection of briyani (flavoured rice) or naans from the tandoor. If the choice of naans seems confusing, ask for the Punjabi basket of bread, which includes a sampling of several varieties including tandoori roti, plain, and *masala kulcha naan* stuffed with onions, green chilli and coriander.

The highlight of an Indian meal is the sweet ending. Desserts like *rasmalai* – paneer balls soaked in clotted cream flavoured with rosewater, pistachio and saffron; *gajar ka halwa* – carrot pudding with milk, sugar and nuts; and *gulab jamun* – fried milk dumplings in a sugar syrup, flavoured with green cardamom and sprinkles of crushed pistachio, will leave you clamouring for more.

A weekday promotion is now on, with the executive set lunch at S\$15++ including a soup, starter, main course, naan or rice, and dessert. Every Thursday is Tandoori Nite, with an all you can eat selection of vegetarian and non-vegetarian kebabs served with dhal and Punjabi roti, and priced at S\$35++ with a 20 per cent discount on alcohol. ■



SHAYRAY PUNJAB

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OPENING HOURS Monday-Friday 11.30am-3pm, 6pm-11pm • Saturday, Sunday and public holidays: 11am-11pm