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Restaurants that Love WINE



KAINOOSH

Marut Sikka's new restaurant has an extensive wine list and is a haven for lovers of Indian cuisine



Trio of Kulfi – Aam Panna, Fig and Pistachio



The non-vegetarian bespoke thali

Somehow it is becoming a bit of a family tradition that I take my wife out on her birthday to one of food impresario Marut Sikka's signature restaurants! The unique and enchanting Magique is always a very special experience, but this year after I heard about the opening of Kainoosh, Marut's new offering on Indian cuisine, we decided to check it out.

Kainoosh itself means cocoon in Persian and one is certainly cocooned in hospitality as soon as one enters. It is conveniently located in a prime spot in the ritzy new DLF Promenade Mall, which makes parking no problem. We were welcomed by the affable Rajesh Chatterjee, the restaurant manager, and led immediately to the next door bar, Keya. The bar is a trendy place done up in black and white, and Rajesh insisted that we try the Kainoosh signature cocktail which is a *paan* mojito! We were initially dubious but the drink more than lived up to its billing – with the refreshing and unique taste that the *paan* leaf gives it.

Rajesh served us the starters at Keya, bringing us an appetizing trio of tandoori prawns in three different flavours: peri-peri, coriander/fennel and cumin and chargrilled chicken tikkas. The prawns were deliciously fresh, fat and succulent and literally melted in one's mouth leaving one craving for more. And more was forthcoming in the form of the main course, which we decided to have in the secluded outside dining area, the weather still being cool enough to enjoy an *al fresco* evening.

In its menu selections, Kainoosh presents an interesting choice between an a la carte menu and the more traditional *thali* concept. The a la carte menu portions are smaller than normal, the idea being to allow diners to sample a larger selection of food, but I'm not sure it works since it also runs

the risk of making one feel shortchanged. However, unable to do justice to the *thali*, we went the a la carte route and ordered the Papad Crusted Rawas with Radish Chutney and the Chicken Shammi Kababs flavoured with Cardamom along with a selection of rotis. The food was cooked to perfection except for the fact that one could have done with an order of plain basmati rice. The menu has only biryani selections which is rather limiting.

I opted for wine by the glass and so got to sample the Astica Torrontes from Argentina and the Caliterra Chardonnay Reserva from Chile, finishing up with a glass of Shiraz from the uniquely named Accomplice vineyard in Australia. The Astica was a little too young and fresh for my liking but the other two were well-matured and enjoyable. The wine menu is diverse and allows for a fair amount of experimentation. After dinner, we enjoyed the trio of kulfi – Aam Panna, Fig and Pistachio.

The Kainoosh interiors are very elegant and stylish in hues of silver grey and creamy white combining traditional details in a contemporary way. Just off the main dining area is a well-appointed private dining room, Izaara, which has its own exclusive entrance and can seat ten people. I particularly liked the ambience of this room with its casual lounge seating and its own bar and music selection. Now I just need to find someone who will invite me to a private party there! ♦

— RANJAN PAL

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