

# Star treatment for beer-and-biryani pioneers

Michelin accolade for Veeraswamy, the London curry house that saw its refreshing drop on the side become a tradition

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IN 1926, when Britain's first Indian restaurant began serving cold beer alongside its curries, it kick-started a British trend that endures today.

Now, 90 years on, Veeraswamy has another claim to fame: its first Michelin star.

The restaurant, which opened on Regent Street in London in 1926, was awarded the ultimate recognition of gastronomic excellence in Michelin's 2017 guide, published yesterday.

Veeraswamy is thought to have been the pioneer of serving beer with curry as in its early days the restaurant was frequented by Prince Axel of Denmark, who routinely brought with him a barrel of Carlsberg to enjoy alongside his Duck Vindaloo.

The beer proved popular with fellow customers, so the restaurant started importing Carlsberg. When waiters left to establish their own restaurants or work elsewhere, they took the idea with them, and the tradition was born.

More recently, Veeraswamy has catered for royal events at the request of the Queen, who has invited its chefs to Buckingham Palace to cook for the Indian president.

Veeraswamy still counts its long-standing Duck Vindaloo among the most popular dishes and also boasts a lamb shank served en croute as well as regional biryanis.

A spokesman for the family-run restaurant, which changed hands 15 years ago, said: "We never dreamt we would get a star. We have been cooking with the same passion these past few years."

"When we took over this place, we restored it to its original form with vibrant blues, oranges and cream decorations, hand-woven carpets and 200-year-old paintings, just like it was 90 years ago. It would be very easy for Michelin to take for granted a 90-year-old restaurant, but we are so glad it has recognised our cooking."

A total of 20 other first-time



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Michelin stars were awarded in this year's guide including one for the Ritz Hotel restaurant, established in 1906.

The Michelin Guide's editor, Rebecca Burr, said: "The Ritz Restaurant and Veeraswamy, London's oldest Indian restaurant, have long and illustrious histories, but the cooking at both has never been better than it is today."

John Williams, executive chef at The Ritz, said: "This star is testament to the entire team's dedication to delivering excellence to every

Veeraswamy in 1963. Left, chef Uday Salumkhe with owners Ranjit Mathrani and Namita Panjabi. Below, lamb shank en croute

guest dining in The Ritz Restaurant daily. I am extremely proud to receive this recognition for the first time as part of the culinary history of this great hotel."

Williams joined The Ritz as executive Chef in 2004, following an 18-year tenure at the Savoy Group. Williams draws inspiration from classic dishes and uses high-quality British produce in season.

The Ritz is owned by Sir David and Sir Frederick Barclay, owners of the Telegraph Media Group. Another first-time star has been



A menu from the early days of Veeraswamy is notable for its relative paucity of dishes – many of which were French, rather than Indian

handed to David Cameron's local, The Wild Rabbit, an 18th-century pub which was renovated in 2013.

It is situated in the Cotswold village of Kingham and was called the "poshest pub in Briton" after its wealthy owner, Lady Bamforth, spent a reported £1 million giving it a makeover.

Mr Cameron is said to have promised his pollster "lunch on me at the Wild Rabbit" if the Remain side won the referendum, according to a biography of the former prime minister.

Meanwhile, Heston Blumenthal's restaurant The Fat Duck, in Bray, Berks, has returned to the guide with three stars, offering "a truly memorable and visceral multi-sensory experience which is informed by a clever narrative".

The restaurant fell off the list last year as it temporarily relocated to Australia.

Ms Burr said of The Fat Duck: "Our inspectors had many meals here during the course of the year and found the restaurant invigorated, rejuvenated and unquestionably worthy of being re-awarded our highest accolade."

A restaurant awarded one star is "very good cooking in its category", while two indicate an establishment is "excellent cooking – worth a detour. Three stars reflect "exceptional cuisine – worthy of a special journey".