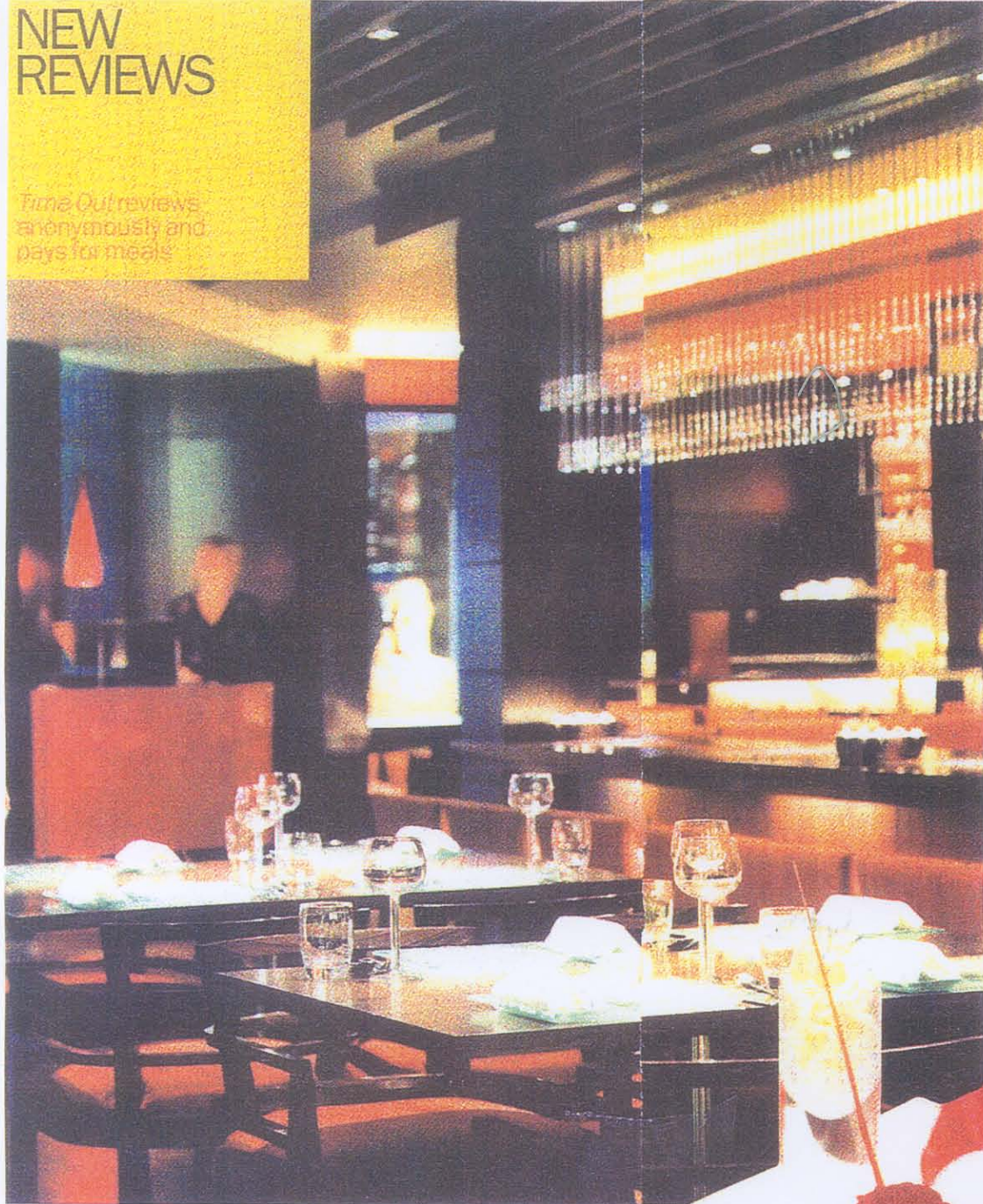


NEW REVIEWS

Time Out reviews anonymously and pays for meals



with kidney and lean mince – is another Muslim speciality, best enjoyed in old bazaars, or now at Amaya. We loved the earthy, full-on flavours of pink-in-the-centre liver cooked with onion, and ginger-laden mince. Even a Punjabi trucker would have given his thumbs up to this dish.

In the main, cooking is evolved, innovative, and focuses on subtlety over brute chilli strength. Spinach tikki are savoury round patties, meltingly soft and filled with a fabulous fresh fig centre – a worthy marriage of flavours. Not all cutting-edge combinations worked though: the tinda (baby squash) was too large to deliver a delicate flavour, and was swamped by a stuffing of rich, borderline oily, spiced halloumi cheese.

What did work was the richly enticing Hyderabadi-style biryani. Good old jackfruit rose to the occasion, its almost meat-like texture complemented by the whiff of heady saffron, sweet mint leaves and aromatic basmati rice. Don't spoil the dish by ordering extra add-ons – go for a yogurt raita if you want to earn nodding respect from the Indian-born staff. That's the way they do it back home.

Our desserts were a huge hit. Highlights include a dreamy rose

'Amaya might do for Indian food what Zuma did for Japanese.'

Amaya

London's best Indian restaurant?

Swish with its gorgeous interior of terracotta statues, darkwood fittings and lustrous surfaces, Knightsbridge's latest Indian restaurant piles up modern Indian flavours with panache. A £1.5 million venture from the Panjabi sisters (Namita and Camellia) of Chutney Mary fame, it, unsurprisingly, puts a whole new spin on going out for a kebab.

Despite an almost-full house, the chefs quietly go about their business in the open kitchen. They're overseen by Karunesh Khanna, who trained at

the highly respected Taj group of hotels in India. Dishes arrive as they're cooked – don't expect individual portions or courses. It's a roti-ripping affair made for sharing, set against a backdrop of candles and glimmering chandeliers.

The kebabs here are nothing like the fat-laden fodder most Londoners are familiar with; many Indian kebabs are light and grease-free. Amaya's menu lists the kebabs in three sections – they're cooked either in a tandoor (clay oven), sigri (charcoal grill), or

tawa (cast-iron griddle). Our gold star went to the dori kebab – a classic speciality from Lucknow made with pounded, smoked lamb, blended with a delicate mix of cardamom and mace, and muted strains of ginger and garlic. Moulded around a skewer, and laced together with fine string, the kebab was cooked over glowing coals, and fell on to our platter with effortless grace after the string was dramatically pulled.

Keema kaleji – lamb liver stir-fried

sorbet, served with chilli custard and a tongue-tingling Bollywood-red plum compote (pictured left).

Amaya's dishes are based in tradition, but look to the future, and take modern Indian cooking to a new level. Amaya might do for Indian food what Zuma did for Japanese – make it hip. *Roopa Gulati*

Amaya Halkin Arcade, Motcomb St, SW1X 8JT (020 7823 1166) Knightsbridge tube. Open Mon-Sat 12.30-2.30pm, 6.30-11pm; Sun 12.30-2.30pm, 6.30-10.30pm. Meal for two with wine and service: around £100.

MING TAVIG EVANS

