

# SquareMeal

## Chutney Mary: The Verdict

Ben McCormack

**Chutney Mary** revolutionised London's restaurant scene when it opened on King's Road in 1990, attracting ambitious young chefs from India who raised the bar for cooking of the subcontinent in the capital. Meanwhile, owners Ranjit Mathrani, Namita Panjabi and Camellia Panjabi went on to revive Regent Street's **Veeraswamy**, as well as launch Michelin-starred **Amaya** and the **Masala Zone** chain.

Now, as the restaurant embarks on a new quarter century, its King's Road site has become **Masala Grill** and Chutney Mary has upped sticks to St James's, taking over what was Wheeler's. Out front is a bar as suitable for lunchtime snacking on sandwiches at a long, shared table as it is for taking in a Watermelon Cosmopolitan on a sofa in the evening, while the dining room behind is generously spaced, comfortably upholstered and softly illuminated by candlelight.

The cooking remains as high-end as ever, so that venison samosa turns out to be two cones of wafer-thin pastry filled with rich minced meat, Rajasthan lal maas has fork-tender osso bucco and boneless lamb shank wallowing in a richly-spiced sauce, while kulfi gets reinvented with salted caramel and cinder toffee. Other dishes to have impressed on our two visits included crisp fried prawns, fragrant Afghani chicken tikka and diverting side orders of thin garlic naan and creamed mustard leaves tasting like fiery spinach. For lunch there are salads, small plates and lighter dishes.

The wine list still merits serious attention, the service from smart, urbane staff is as polished as it was in Chelsea and there are two very well-appointed private rooms downstairs. With breakfast soon to be added to the list of attractions, the all-new Chutney Mary has everything you could want from a smart Indian restaurant.



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