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A word to the wise, our maître d' tells us; we're crowded out on Thursday evenings and Friday lunch times... which is as well to know, as right now we are the only clientele gracing one of Dubai's newest Indian restaurants. Namaste — A Taste of India is hardly three months old and is tucked inside an equally new hotel — the Excelsior Creek, which is a stone's throw from BurJuman Centre and Khalid bin Al Waleed metro station. Unless you have been told of its existence, or are a guest at the hotel, you are unlikely to know of it, since no one seems to have thought fit to advertise its presence outside the hotel.

And that's a pity, because in almost every other respect the owners have gone to great lengths to ensure their customers have an excellent meal at value-for-money prices, served by attentive waiters to the sound of soulful ghazals. The maître d' has been flown in from London; the ghazal band from Delhi (the talented duo is happy to take requests from diners, and to chat about their 'recent' move to Dubai); and the food is unabashedly aimed at Indian expatriates and the growing number of 'foreigners' who crave a taste of India.

We sit in red-and-gold chairs at red-gold-black covered tables — with red-and-black walls and red-

Sushmita Bose and Brian Salter sample kebabs and *desi* fare at **Namaste — A Taste of India**, in Bur Dubai, and come back licking their chops

and-gold drapes complementing the ensemble nicely — and simultaneously plump for sharp-tasting mint mohitos from the drinks menu (a good choice as it turns out) — before attending to the task in hand: eating.

For starters, we are served the non-vegetarian platter, that comes chock-full with kebabs (mutton, chicken, fish): *seekh*, *achari*, *rashmi*, *burra* and *tikka*. The stuff is succulent and delicious, and easily one of the best we've had in Dubai.

An unusual chicken-and-mushroom curry with crisp rotis follow (we decide to give the tempting offer of biryani a miss since we're already reeling after the kebab onslaught); after biting into it, we are both left shaking our heads in semi-wonder — the C&M fettucine alfredo has dead serious competition from this *desi* delight.

The standout is probably the

machli tamatar (kingfish cooked in tomato gravy): tangy and spicy and very yummy. Not a trace is left behind in the ravaged bowl by the time we sit back to breathe. And yes, a pat on the back for the humble *dal tadka* (yellow lentils) — this simple (and very homely) dish, served in little *katoris* (bowls), goes wonderfully well with the rest of the meal (which also includes some plain vanilla mutton curry — an absolute treat).

Even as our stomachs attempt (unsuccessfully) to convince us we have had enough to eat, we round the meal off with sinful *gulab jamuns* plonked on a hearty blob of ice cream before staggering out into the night to walk off some of the excess on the way to the metro.

Next time you feel like tasting flavours from India and savouring Indian hospitality, we'd definitely recommend a trip down to Namaste. You won't be disappointed.

What we liked: Food, prices, music, service.

What we didn't like: Our stomachs weren't big enough to cope with everything on offer.

Dh150 for two
Namaste, Excelsior Creek Hotel, Bur Dubai, 04 3831623