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RESTAURANT REVIEW

Where the spice of life excites ...



Onion rice

The Hilal, Walton Road, Stockton Heath

by Rob James

WHOEVER coined the phrase 'variety is the spice of life' has clearly been to the Hilal Restaurant on Walton Road in Stockton Heath!

This popular eaterie has plenty of variety and plenty of spice when it comes to its menu.

As a self-proclaimed connoisseur of Indian cuisine it's always a pleasure to come across a menu that opens up new sensory experiences and that's exactly what I found at the Hilal (which literally means half moon or crescent in Arabic).

A friendly welcome awaited me, an oft overlooked facet of any restaurant experience, and I sat down to peruse a menu that combines traditional dishes with a sprinkling of innovative thinking.

I found myself enthused by the lime pickle entree, a tremendously fragrant concoction, the best I've ever had and a fine start to the meal.

Onto the mixed vegetable pakora starter and an ensemble of perfectly battered cauliflower, potato and other vegetables went down very well with a mint yoghurt that was exquisite.

My main course was a Kofta Sambar with a finely prepared paratha bread



Kofta Sambar

and onion rice to accompany. These spicy little lamb meatballs make for a wonderful main ingredient within any Indian sauce and you could tell from the texture and taste that these had been created with top quality lamb mince.

I've not come across a Sambar before but I will again. This rich and spicy tomato and lentil sauce was infused with fresh lemon giving it a zesty kick that complemented the meaty koftas very well. The onion rice was a feast in itself and clearly prepared using the freshest onions around.

All in all a very positive experience and sometimes it's those little touches

'The menu that combines traditional dishes with a sprinkling of innovative thinking...'

that really mark a venue out. Excellent and friendly customer service, an inventive menu that challenges convention and, of course, lime pickle to die for!

