

Restaurant review: The Vedas

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That's where new venues like The Vedas, in Bolton, come in, offering the promise of a fresh approach to the spicy fare we had begun to take for granted and serving it in surroundings that are a far cry from the flock-wallpapered premises of yore.

But it's a big ask (as latest sporting parlance has it) to reach into the drawer marked reinvention and come up with a formula that really works, without appearing to strive for effect.

Could the people behind this restaurant do it? Well, almost three years ago, CityLife ventured to an unassuming mill town to their first venture, and this is part of what we said: "City slicker or country bumpkin? Town mouse or country mouse? Metropolitan sophisticate or hick from the sticks?"

"Whatever phrase you want to use, the distinction has always been clear - the city stands for cool and chic, while small town or rural living is seen as desperately dull.

"Well, the city will have to think again if more establishments spring up like The Vedas in Todmorden. The little town north of Manchester, squeezed into its narrow valley, has long had an identity crisis as it straddles the Lancashire-Yorkshire border.

"But The Vedas knows just where it is ... firmly placed among the new wave of Indian restaurants bringing a big city approach to cuisine."

So, there you have it - the original got a firm thumbs-up. And, obviously, enough people agreed with our assessment to merit the opening of not one, but two more branches, both set up over the past six months or so. The Bolton diner has a sister venue at Chill Factor in Trafford Quays.



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Hi-tech ski centre

But CityLife has already been to the hi-tech ski centre, to run the rule over Eiger, so we were off to the land of Peter Kay to see if the new venture lived up to the benchmark set by The Vedas No 1.

Sitting in a modern building within the town centre, the first impression is one of space.

With an expanse of wood floor, tastefully modern bar and cool, light-coloured walls, the interior is a world away from “traditional curry house”.

A group of leather sofas adjoin the bar and large windows give the place an airy feel, while the dining space is cleverly divided by a walkway, the latter part also being split-level. High-backed brown leather chairs and smart linen greet the diner as he takes in the extensive menu.

Tikka masala

The old favourites are there, to be sure including, of course, our old friend tikka masala, but there’s much more of interest to be found in an array of dishes that also embrace a crossover element.

So, we browsed from mainstays such as chicken or lamb balti to the more adventurous Bengal roasted sea bass fillet (£9.90), roasted lamb shank - at £13.50 the joint dearest dish with barrel-rolled 8oz fillet steak - and monkfish medallions (£12.50).

I opted for curried monkfish parcels (£4.95) to start, followed by tandoori lamb chops (£11.50). The former were piping hot with a filling that was creamy in texture, offering a good contrast to the al-dente coating. The chops, flavoured with lemon juice and cumin, were accompanied by a rhogani sauce and pilau rice. The meat was moist and succulent, while portions were filling without being overfacing.

Mrs T chose her favourite Indian starter of mixed kebab - a trio of chicken tikka, sheek kebab and onion bhaji - with chicken kali mirch to follow.

The former was pronounced very much on the money, while the latter - a dish she had never tried before - was a tastebud treat, a tangy cracked black pepper and yoghurt curry.

Choice of desserts, as with most Indian restaurants, proved not to be a strong point, but I enjoyed a cheese platter followed by coffee.

To drink? Well, I reckon the perfect accompaniment to such fare is a real whistle-wetter, so it had to be Cobra lager, while Mrs T went for wine by the glass, a dry Chardonnay, hitting the spot.

The Vedas, Bolton lives up to the early promise of the “mothership” and continues to further the cause of Indian cuisine.

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Frank Turner

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