

An on-going love affair with great food

by Michael Grahamslaw



Sachins is a stylish Indian restaurant featuring terracotta urns and a spiral staircase. It serves great Indian food generally and Punjabi specialities especially.

This is not just another Indian restaurant and even the most discerning diners can have a unique opportunity to sample the very finest Punjabi foods in a fresh and invigorating environment.

Initially Bob and Neeta Arora frequented Sachin's as regular customers because of its great food. The couple dreamt of owning the place one day and in 2000, they turned that dream into reality.

They immediately set about improving their acquisition and worked tirelessly in an effort to develop an already thriving business into an empire without equal in the city of Newcastle. From a full kitchen re-fit to a complete interior refurbishment, the couple wasted no time putting a personal stamp on the beautiful building whilst retaining its essential character which they and other customers had grown to love.

Now fifteen years on, Bob and Neeta's devotion and dedication has developed Sachins far beyond their expectations with the restaurant's dishes appearing on the shelves of Fenwick's as well as a thriving outside catering initiative which is very much in demand.

On the day we dined there, my business

guests and I quickly identified that the vast menus were much more inventive than standard Indian fare. With over thirty starters on offer we decided to think outside the normal safe comfort zone of chicken tikka bhuna and tikka masala and adventurously kicked off with dishes of Lucknowi tikka, a delicious mixture of spiced chickpeas, paneer and baby spinach cakes, pan fried and served with tamarind sauce; Machi Kofta delicately spiced salmon, crab and potatoes cooked in bread crumbs, shallow fried and served with curried mayonnaise and Hara Bara kebab, vegetable tikka made with potatoes, peas, spinach and paneer combined with gram flour and pan fried for the vegetarian in our party. Other items on the starters menu that caught my eye were Peshawari Bakra Tikka which consisted of diced spring lamb marinated in Punjabi spices and barbecued in a tandoor and Chilli Chingri, a great sounding dish of King prawns marinated with gram flour, chilli and garlic cooked in the heart of the tandoor. Either one (or both) of these will be my choice of starter next time – and there will definitely be a next time.

A big step forward for me but with such an extensive and tempting menu, it was time to try something a little more edgy and I'm so pleased I did.

For mains, there were separate menus for Murgli (poultry) detailing eighteen dishes, Bakra (lamb) with seventeen dishes and Sumunddar

(sea food) with ten choices. Some dishes in each section were called Shearers, after the local legend himself and include a donation to the Alan Shearer Foundation. Apparently, Alan and Bob created the dishes together. Good on them both.

We dined regally on dishes of Karahi goshat, diced lamb cooked in Punjabi spices and tossed in an iron wok over a bed of onions served medium dry; Shearers, diced chicken cooked in Punjabi spices in a yoghurt and tomato based sauce, and Machar Joul, a speciality from Bengal with marinated monkfish pieces, barbequed and cooked in a medium spiced sauce. Oh wow.

Apart from being a very talented chef, Bob is probably one of the most industrious people on the Newcastle restaurant scene. Not only does he devote endless hours to the restaurant and the various schemes attached to it but he works hard away from it, preparing his speciality dishes at cooking demonstrations across the region. Always well received by the public, Bob gets equal pleasure from these activities through meeting new people, seeing them enjoy foods they've never tried before and answering questions about his recipes. Thanks to Bob and Neeta, new generations are being introduced to Punjabi style cooking with a special local students menu.

With a history of prosperity, I am sure Sachins can look forward to a future of the same and knowing them like I do, it will endeavour to continue doing it with great panache and style. Speaking of star quality, the restaurant was recently visited by Messrs Clarkson, Hammond and May formerly of BBC TV Top Gear fame. Petrol-head Bob once auditioned and nearly got a presenters job on the show. Could that be who The Stig really is? Bob's not telling!

Sachins has recently been awarded the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence 2015. This award is for UK restaurants that consistently earn great reviews from diners. It must be really satisfying for Bob when his culinary expertise is appreciated. It's something the discerning people of Tyneside have all known for years – and long may it last.

