



Nicely spicy

Georgetown
Colwick Hall Hotel
Racecourse Road,
Nottingham

You know when you go somewhere great and as you unwind, your mind starts to wander and you start thinking about how you could quite happily live there - well, in a parallel universe, you'll find me at Colwick Hall, sat beside the lake with a Singapore Sling.

It was one of those balmy evenings when we pulled up to the Hall for dinner at their Georgetown Malaysian restaurant. Our thoughts soon turned to what we were going to order for dinner. The Georgetown menu is a thorough pleasure to peruse - there are four sections, each representing a different element of Malaysian cuisine: Malay, Chinese, Indian and Vegetarian. You can experiment, mix and match your favourite dishes, or purists can stick to just one menu - it's up to you and the waiters are happy to advise.

We opened a bottle of crisp Sauvignon Blanc, took a seat at our table among the smart, colonial decor and our appetisers arrived. My partner opted for *Poh Pia* - a selection of vegetables, prawns and meat wrapped in a thin pancake and served with a sweet chilli dip. It was an excellent opening gambit with its intensely packed savoury tang and a spicy burst that quickly diffused in a very moreish way.

I went for *Vegetable Tim Sum*, small dumplings with leek, carrots and parsnip, lightly steamed and served in a bamboo basket. It came with two dips of hot and sweet chilli, that really complemented all the flavours. We were already looking forward to more.

Next came our second course. Across the table arrived a *Laksa Lemak* - a coconut curry soup packed with surprises. Dig in and you'll find Singapore noodles, strips of chicken, prawns, beansprouts, tofu and Chinese greens - no spoonful was the same twice. It came served with a small, mysterious dish of '*sambal belachan*' - crushed chillies in vinegar, which can be added to the soup as you wish. The laksa itself was smooth and creamy with a lively kick, then, with a spoonful of the additional blend, a whole new dimension was added - it became deeper, hotter and magically enhanced the coconut hit - the dish was quite a talking point!

I went for *Roasted Peppers and Asparagus with Tamarind Rice* and from the very first mouthful, felt very pleased with myself. On the plate was a riot of colour that just said: 'eat me'. I could immediately appreciate the freshness of all the ingredients, perfectly cooked with a zing of spice. An delicious blend of textures further enhanced the dish, particularly the buttery-soft lentils scattered throughout and a crispy lime topping. It was delicious.

Our main courses arrived in good time, I opted (after considerable deliberation), for *Vegetable Claypot*. The dish arrived in two parts: a dome of fragrant coconut rice and a claypot. Lifting the lid, I felt like the Bisto kid as all sorts of enticing aromas swirled up. Bamboo shoots, carrots, crunchy water chestnuts, tomatoes, tofu, mushrooms, beansprouts and bok choy were all in there, with an unmistakable slow-cooked

depth of flavour. Each component retained its integrity with some parts crunchy (water chestnuts), some melt in the mouth (tofu) and there was a pleasing consistency to its spiciness.

My companion opted for *Udang Tempura* and was presented with a visually showstopping array of tiger prawns, julienne carrots, sautéed potatoes and Chinese greens all arranged artfully around a chilli dip. After a series of appreciative murmurings, they tucked in. The prawns were instantly deemed: 'fantastic' with their crispy bite of batter and succulent middle. Some got dipped, some went down as they were, it was nice to have the option. The carrots had caramelised onion whose sweetness went so well with the spicy potatoes and their fiery mustard seeds. Clean plates went back to the kitchen on both counts.

To round off the meal, we were tempted by the dessert menu - I defy anyone not to be. My partner went for *Citrus Fruit Sorbet*, me, the enigmatically named *Nanas JB*.

We did well, because the sorbet comprised a refreshing lemon and a fruity cassis selection served with sliced melon and mint springs. And the nanas? I was brought tangy, fresh pineapple, dressed with a nip of dark rum, a dash of maple syrup and speckled vanilla ice cream. It was utterly delectable and both were the perfect way to end a memorable meal.

Although we had eaten plenty, we were not over full, I think this was because we'd satisfied sweet, savour and spicy taste sensations. We'll definitely be making a return visit, not least because there are so many other things on the menu we wish to sample, but also, because I want to go back when the live pianist is playing (that'd be on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday), so I'll see you there.

Katherine Taylor

