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Gilgamesh

By Efrat Gilboa - Tuesday 24th 2009f March 2009

You know Gilgamesh is unique even before entering the legendary Camden haunt.



Not content with a simple door to match the humble surroundings of the market, the entrance is marked by an escalator and guarded by a burly bouncer - not typical 'Camden', to say the least. Surprisingly - and thankfully - no questions were asked and once we stepped onto the escalator, the intricate beauty of the artwork and the real effort put into the design of this elegant establishment was visible all around us.

The superior craftsmanship doesn't end there - the Babylonian imagery within the design extends to the whole space - the bar area and restaurant, as well as each and every table are all artworks in themselves that have been painstakingly handcrafted - even the ceiling panels. I had to tear myself away from one of the indulgent swings at the risk of embarrassing myself by acting like a little child whilst sipping a cheeky pre-dinner mojito.

The Pan Asian cuisine is over seen by famous head chef Ian Pengelley, and this shows both in presentation of the food and in taste. We browsed the ?40 set menu and found a great selection of top-quality dishes for a bargain price - this was ideal, as my dining companion was vegetarian and so was delighted when he learnt that he could choose between several dishes within a separate vegetarian set menu option.

The set menu - vegetarian and non-vegetarian - comprises three courses, and I was tempted by the duck and watermelon salad for starters, which was colourfully contemporary and whose flavours fused to perfection. My partner indulged in baby corn and asparagus tempura, which was perfectly crisp yet soft and delectable. We devoured out starters as if we have not seen food in years and were eagerly awaiting our mains to see what genius fusion surprises were in store for us.

We were not let down - my main of Chinese red snapper with yuzu soy butter sauce couldn't have been cooked better, and I savoured every bite. In addition to a main, I was offered an accompaniment as part of the set menu offer and my choice of jasmine rice presented itself as an ideal

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With just a couple of weeks to go until Pesach, you're probably racking your brains trying to think of what to rustle up to keep the hungry hordes happy during the weeklong festival. Want some tasty tips for Pesach recipes? Well why not try these three suggestions from the Jewish

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partner to my dish.

Equally contented was my now-silent friend, who I could see was enjoying his Malay noodles with tofu and beansprouts, together with an accompaniment of stir fried pea shoot sprouts with garlic and ginger almost closing his eyes with satisfaction. I had to try and indeed the dish was sublime - the flavours worked well and it had a real edge to it that simply worked. Again, the presentation was outstanding and the flavours strong, complementing each other yet remaining distinct.

We took our time between courses and enjoyed the buzzing atmosphere as well as some more great cocktails - I an apple and fig martini (?9.50) and my partner a kutu (?9.50), comprising an irresistible mix of chilli, mint and pink grapefruit, shaken together with Bombay Sapphire gin. I like to think that this cleansed our palate before moving onto the comforting end of the evening - dessert. The tropical fruit mousse with jelly was refreshing and light, yet satisfyingly flavoursome.

Of course, an a la carte menu is also available offering an array of dishes - from small dim sum, edamame and soup, salads and sushi - to the larger delights such as the fillet of beef bulgogi, Gilgamesh caters for everyone's moods and tastes, while the black rice specialities are both nutritious and unmissable.

A trip to Gilgamesh equals a truly unique dining experience. We felt as if we had stepped back in time and escaped the maddening Camden crowds in an instance. The service was professional yet laidback and we did not feel rushed at any stage of our experience. We were treated like royalty and felt so in the most opulent and comfortable chairs. Gilgamesh is a perfect mix of old and new, so neatly reflected both in its design and menu.

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Princesses aka Georgie Tarn and Tracey Fine. The recipes come from their latest book, Feasts and Festivals. Thanks to the princesses, we have five copies of the book to give away.

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