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Gilgamesh



Stepping off an escalator into Gilgamesh, it's hard not to marvel at this cavernous space, hidden from the street below by heavy curtains. With low, red-tinged lighting and intricately carved wooden panelling that decorates the long bar and most of the back wall, it's clear no expense has been spared in creating an Aladdin's cave, where the treasure happens to be the cocktails and food.

Perhaps it's the twinkling lights, or maybe the bright brocade of the balconettes but we managed not to feel too auspicious despite being only the third table to

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arrive for dinner in such a big room. Later in the evening, as the room filled, the buzz was soothing and despite the tables being close together we still managed to feel we had our own space on our curved seat.

The fusion food has an Asian theme at Gilgamesh, primarily Japanese, and we got stuck into the five new "black rice" dishes that the restaurant has just launched. Black rice is incredibly nutritious, according to the menu, which hopefully counteracted the tempura and delicious mayonnaise, of which we consumed way too much. The mix of fruit in the savoury dishes can surely only have benefited us too. Included in our starters was a duck and watermelon salad and some prawn and banana spring rolls which both managed to taste a lot better than they sounded. The waiting staff were better than any I have encountered since the last time I was in Canada, or perhaps Australia. Our main waiter was entertaining, knowledgeable and attentive without so much as a hint of hovering.

We must have sampled (and by sampled, I mean demolished) about nine dishes, which were divided by our waiter into starters and mains. Then, already full to bursting, we were told we must try the dessert plate - a selection of four desserts and accompanying sorbets. Well, if we must. The milk chocolate praline fondant was so good it disappeared far too quickly (trying to chase the elusive "praline" is the excuse I'm sticking to). The warm green tea banana cake was pretty scrumptious as well, even more so with the coconut sorbet it came with. Even considering this though, the highlights at Gilgamesh are absolutely the savoury dishes. We encountered several spot-on blends of flavours and textures, in particular the house specials of the Mr Chang sushi - a flash-fried roll of sushi with prawns and avocado; and the Miso Chilean Sea Bass, a large piece of melt-in-the-mouth fish that had been marinated thoroughly in sticky miso. Indulgent and delicious, it was a great balance with the elegantly constructed lobster and avocado salad. From the new menu we were enamoured with the black rice risotto, a martini class of creamy saltiness with a generous helping of crab and the earthy nuttiness of the black rice to cut through it all. Very rich on it's own but to share amidst some of their other dishes it was perfect. The battered sea-bass nigiri was pretty tasty too, though the sushi roll with toro and daikon paired with the earthy black rice was slightly bland - two out of three not bad for its debut night.

Gilgamesh is somewhere I'd return to just for the chilled buzz of the venue, but I would return faster to have Mr Chang's roll again. Great cooking, great service, great room. Tasting menus that will serve you a big variety of these fabulous dishes start at £45 per person, or go wild and let the staff help you. From our experience I doubt you could go too far wrong.

Gilgamesh: Camden View, Camden Stables Market, Chalk Farm Road, London, NW1 8AH. Tel: 020 7 482 5757.

Reviewed by: Jennifer Earle

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