



Eating Out... from fine dining to exquisite pub grub, we recommend the best



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Pushkar Dining - Birmingham

245 Broad Street, Birmingham, B1 2HQ.
+44 (0)121 643 7978
www.pushkardining.com
Review by Emily Hirschmann

A few months ago something strange happened in Birmingham's Broad Street, a place name synonymous with tawdry night life and dodgy low-cost eateries to anyone who happens to be familiar with the city of Birmingham; a place name which has been known to instil terror into the heart of more than one passing gourmand.



A rumour swirled through the air of this city street, a susurrus telling an impossible tale of attractive decor, affable service, stylish cocktail bar and – surely not – freshly prepared, delicately balanced, carefully thought out, mouth-watering, original sustenance. Another urban myth designed to taunt the culinary select? Perhaps not. This, my friend, is Pushkar. You step through the glittering doorway onto the interactive computer-generated fish pond and a little voice inside you murmurs; "Dorothy, you're not in Broad Street anymore."

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Promptly greeted and escorted to our table, my companion and I were somewhat lost for words. Initially, the Pushkar decor is a little over-whelming; where as I could have happily spent a few hours playing with the electronic fish pool (I want one; my cat would never want to leave the house again), the interior gleams to a degree that is slightly unsettling. Everything is white and gold and shiny and angular, very stylish, but speaking more of modernist nouvelle cuisine than traditional Indian homespun fare, which made me glance at the menu with some trepidation. I needn't have been concerned.

Pushkar defines itself as an authentic Punjabi restaurant, rather than Indian, boasting a range of specialist traditional dishes, so I was delighted when the smiling waitress offered to run through the house specials with me.

Having munched our way through a popadam basket with a side of gorgeous dips, my companion and I opted to begin our meal proper by sharing the Pushkar Panorama (£9.95); a taster board of each of the vegetarian starters, impressively presented and beautifully flavoured. The Spinach and Prune Cakes were the platter stand-out for my eating partner, where I found it hard to pick a favourite, saving for my usual biased slavering over the Paneer Shashlik, everything being of a remarkable standard.



For mains Kadhai Murgh (£9.95), a spicy chicken breast dish, was the order of the day for my friend, while I moved away from my comfort-zone and took the advice of our waitress, trying three of the more traditional mains in side dish portions (£4.45 each); Dal Makhani (black lentils) Bhindi Singara Do (spicy okra with water chestnuts) and Pyaza Baingan Masala (baby aubergines in a tangy sauce). Now, I'm very picky when it comes to my aubergines; get your timing slightly out and the sensation is not unlike eating a damp sponge, in both taste and texture, but I'm pleased to report that at Pushkar the little suckers were practically melt-in-the-mouth. Each dish held the crunch and tang of fresh spices and a subtly of flavour never found in your average curry house.

For desert, refreshingly in an Asian establishment, I was spoilt for choice, having my curiosity piqued by both the Garam Masala Brulee and a grated carrot dish, Gajar Ka Halwa, before inevitably giving into the call of gluttony and ordering the delectable Chocomosa (£4.95) - golden fried parcels of filo pastry stuffed with a roast almond and chocolate filling, served with vanilla ice cream. Mmmmm, the only appropriate word to spring to mind is yummy! My companion went for the less adventurous, but nonetheless tasty Kulfi (£4.45). And so, some fantastic fresh juices, a beer and glass of white wine aside, our work here was done!



Somewhat surprisingly, Pushkar is the brainchild of an economist by education, who's reached the restaurant business via the slightly unusual route of the fashion industry and a stint in Tel Aviv working for MTV, as such he's been able to bring something a little bit special to this, his first gastronomic project. Pushkar is brimful of pizzazz; it's striking in appearance and stands head and shoulders above its neighbours for attention-grabbing first impressions, but all that would be a little bit pointless if it didn't have such a solid grounding in good quality, affordable, flavoursome food. There's a lot of competition at the moment, in the burgeoning market of "new Indian" restaurants, but I don't think that Pushkar need worry; from what I've seen they have what it takes to succeed and hopefully where they lead other Broad Street restaurateurs will follow.

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