

Indian master piece

As Indian cuisine becomes more popular in New Zealand and tastes develop beyond the traditional 'Butter Chicken' you will struggle to find any better purveyor of the craft that is Indian cookery than The Master of India in Ahuriri, Napier.

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Set on a quiet side street in the centre of Ahuriri's exclusive shopping district, with its art galleries and antique shops, The Master of India mixes the traditional taste of India with the changing tastes of its clientele. "We have worked closely with our customers over the last ten years to produce flavours to suit the local pallet," says restaurant owner, Sanjay Patel.

Having grown up in Valsad, a farming town in Gujarat, India, known for its diamonds, mangoes and silk, Sanjay and his wife, Sangita, moved to New Zealand in 1996 in search of a better place to bring up their children. After exploring the North Island in search of the right place the two qualified microbiologists decided to settle in the beautiful city of Napier some ten years ago.

"There were not many Indian families in Napier when we first arrived but we made

friends very easily, especially with some of our customers, who became regulars and are now, after all this time, very close family friends," says Sanjay.

Enjoying the New Zealand lifestyle

The couple's three daughters quickly adapted to life in New Zealand and have become real kiwis, enjoying the outdoor lifestyle with their parents and playing basketball, cricket and netball, and heading off to the ski fields of Mount Ruapehu whenever they can.

And they have followed in their parents footsteps academically as one daughter is now a chartered accountant in Wellington, another studying biomedicine in Auckland and their youngest still studying hard at school in Napier.

Sanjay and Sangita pride themselves on the traditional Indian welcome you receive

as you enter their restaurant and have paid much attention to detail with the authentic Indian décor. Exotically decorated tables, chairs, wall hangings and chandruva (decorative materials on the ceiling) have been imported to make you feel you are dining with the Patel's back in their home town. Having a background in microbiology has made them ideal restaurateurs; they are very careful to use only the freshest of local produce and instill the highest hygiene standards into their staff, so much so it takes some new employees a few days just to adapt to their stringent standards.

Both think highly of their customers' nutritional wellbeing and reduce fat content of dishes whenever possible, without diminishing the taste, also offering a gluten free meal. The majority of fare on offer in this elegant restaurant is based on Northern Indian recipes

FAMILY AFFAIR: Customers discover a true Indian experience with authentically created dishes, decor and the Patel's very own personal touch.

CELEBRATIONS: Sangita and Sanjay share a very special moment.



with their richer, creamier, spicier and more flavoursome tastes, but The Master of India also serves meals in a Southern Indian style - hotter with coconut and a rice base - and Western Indian - less spicy with stir fried or roasted vegetables and lentils.

Vegetarian choice

All dishes and their sauces are prepared fresh so the 'heat' can be adjusted to each individual's taste, and all produce is sourced locally wherever possible. As Sanjay and Sangita are both vegetarian there is a huge choice of vegetable dishes available to be eaten as a main course or as a side dish.

The Patel's have built up such a close relationship with many of their regulars, underlining the quality of the food and service at The Master of India, and will often pass

on family recipes or help and advice to those trying to prepare traditional Indian food in their own homes. This friendship was no more apparent than during Sanjay and Sangita's daughter's wedding in India earlier in the year when several 'regulars' were invited to attend the week long ceremony, and several did!

"All our family and friends got together one month before the wedding to celebrate their engagement," Sanjay says. "We had about 200 people come for lunch then dinner and a religious ceremony. Relatives and friends then started to arrive about one week before the traditional Indian wedding and we looked after them, fed and housed them for that week."

Sanjay and Sangita have introduced many new dishes into New Zealand, dishes you now see in many other restaurants around the country but which were available in this

exquisite restaurant in Ahuriri first, and with a little advance notice they will even prepare a special meal to suit your requirements; just ask.

With a choice of four Indian beers; Kingfisher, Cobra, Flying Horse and Taj, and a comprehensive selection of Hawke's Bay wines and soft drinks to choose from, you are sure to find something to cool your palate and complement your meal. The Master of India serves all the dishes you would expect to find in a traditional Indian restaurant in New Zealand, and plenty more you are unlikely to find elsewhere. The dedicated team pride themselves in excellent service and high quality food and a visit to this exquisite restaurant will live up to your highest expectations.

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