

The Tiger earns its stripes

Some like it hot, some like their spices a little more subtle - this restaurant at Monk's Heath caters for all tastes

There's a lady somewhere in Cheshire who, allegedly, enjoys her curries so fiery that the kitchen brigade at the Bengal Tiger Lily call her off-menu favourite "The Hot Harriet". And it's so addictive - must be those potent endorphins at work - there are now at least six other devotees.

The restaurant, at Monk's Heath cross close to the huge Astra Zeneca complex at Alderley Park, is part of a small group and has been open for about two years, during which staff have been gauging the tastes of a growing local clientele.

Our taste is for much more subtlety in the spicing, and we discovered the Tiger Lily delivers this too - and with aplomb in stylish, contemporary surroundings.

From the outside, the stand-alone modern building still resembles the Little Chef restaurant it once was. But inside the ambience is relaxing with a mix of seating beneath pendant lighting suspended from a lowered ceiling composed of geometric shapes. The only real giveaway that this is an Indian restaurant is the ambient music.

The menu - and it's a long one comprising starters, chef's specialities, Tiger Lily recommendations, tandoori dishes and old favourites along with sides, breads, rice and sundries - makes the point from the outset that the kitchen is open to requests. So, a lot to ponder over refreshing Cobra beers, fresh and crispy poppadums and a quartet of relishes, including a very moreish tandoori mint and chilli sauce. And we settled for subtlety over sledgehammer heat.

My starter of Tandoori Lamb Chops



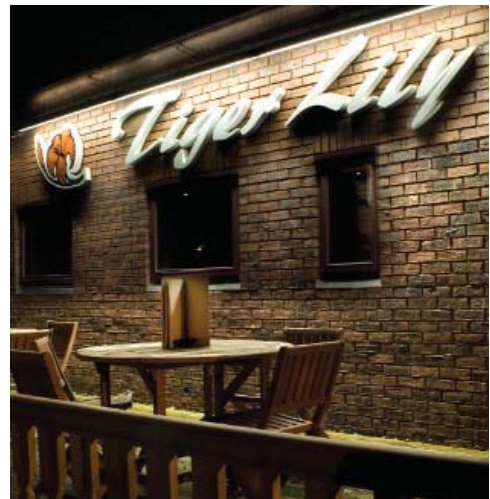
(£4.50) was exemplary. The lamb was delightfully tender, freshly seared in the blazing heat of the tandoor oven and offering mild herb and spice flavours from its marinade. Mrs K chose Bhuna Prawns on Puree (£4.50), plentiful prawns tossed in butter and served with spiced caramelised onions, coriander and a well-judged hint of chilli on a light, crisp pastry.

Since we always seem to over-order in Indian restaurants, we decided to share Monkfish Tikka (£10.75) and a Tiger Lily Special Biryani (£10.95) with no extra rice, just one garlic naan bread and a side dish of spinach and cheese Sag Paneer (£3.95) which turned out to be more than adequate. Monkfish is an option in many of the Tiger Lily's dishes and its boneless, firm texture is ideal for purpose.

The tikka came as moist, juicy chunks of fish sizzling on a cast iron platter in its marinade of lemon juice, yoghurt, mustard sauce and "special fish spices", having been barbecued in the tandoor.

The accompanying sauce, deliciously complimentary, was marginally hotter than the mild vegetable curry served with the biryani and we enjoyed the contrast. The classic basmati rice dish itself comprised an assured and subtly spiced pilau with cardamom, turmeric and cinnamon generously endowed with chicken, lamb, prawns and caramelised onions, garnished with tomatoes and topped by a light omelette. Attention to detail ensured the spinach and cheese offered lovely flavours in a creamy, satisfying texture and the naan was huge, fresh and light.

The Tiger Lily's wine list has been





assembled with as much thought as the food menu, offering a range of fruit-driven, generously-flavoured choices which are not overwhelmed by Indian cuisine, especially at our preferred subtle end of the curry thermometer. Hence the listing of zesty sauvignon blancs from Chile and New Zealand, Alsace gewürztraminer and New Zealand dry riesling. Blockbuster reds like Argentine malbec, cabernet and merlot from Chile, Aussie shiraz and Spanish Rioja are also prominent and most are priced below £20. Our La Playa unoaked chardonnay from Chile came in at a modest £15.95.
Ray King

The Bengal Tiger Lily,
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Macclesfield, SK10 4TD. 01625
890379, www.bengaltigerlily.com.

Blooming marvellous

Three more flowery venues to try

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4QU

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Meal *in a minute*

**Digest this mini-review
in 60 seconds**

**The Tollemache Arms,
Chester Road, Alraham,
Tarpoley, CW6 9JE.
01829 261716**



Style of venue

A cosy, welcoming Robinsons pub with roaring log fires and large comfortable armchairs to relax in during the winter and a big beer garden to enjoy during the warmer months.

On the menu

Traditional pub food without a fuss with a large emphasis on local produce. Expect bread from Frodsham's Devonshire Bakery, brie from nearby Tiresford Farm and ale from Robinsons in their steak and ale pie. We shared the smooth chicken liver pate (£3.95) to start, a feta, red pepper, pesto and lettuce wrap and a chilli con carne wrap for our main. The dessert menu, which was too much to contemplate on this occasion, has a good selection of comforting puds including warm apple pie, chocolate brownie and sticky toffee pudding.

Décor

A traditional, rustic design with lots of wood beams, woodburners and fires to curl up in front of and quiet corners for a cosy dinner for two.

Ambience

We visited early in the evening on a dreary Tuesday when the pub was far from full but there was still a great atmosphere.

Service

Quick, efficient and friendly.

Cost

Expect to pay around £30 for a starter, main and dessert for two people with soft drinks.

Suitability for entertainment

It's the ideal comfortable pub to while away an afternoon enjoying a drink and simple food, done well.

Emma Mayoh