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Typhoo times with TV Chef Vicky Ratnani

AALOK WADHWA JANUARY 23, 2013

[Rating: 3.5/5]



It is a nippy afternoon and I am at Aqua at the Park Hotel at the invitation of Typhoo tea, a leading brand of tea in the UK, and now also in India, thanks to the company's purchase by Apeejay Surendra group. The plot for the lunch being shared with a small audience is to have an 'out of the pot' time with TV Chef Vicky Ratnani, where he promises to perfectly balance food with the right type of tea to allow us to explore new tastes and uncover hidden flavours.



The afternoon starts with a tasting of Typhoon fruit infusions. The lemon and lime zest shot is refreshing, and the orange spicer shot is heady, given the extra infusion of vodka in it. It is time for Vicky to demonstrate how he prepares his masala tea poached chicken with masala mashed potato and pickled cucumber ribbons (detailed recipe below). He is

a great presenter and has the audience engaged throughout the process. I smell the sauce that he makes and its heady aroma overcomes the reservation about having poached chicken breast for lunch (it is not one of my favourites). After the engaging demonstration, we are all seated for the three course lunch.



The first course is a salad of harissa spiced grilled veggies with mint and rocket leaf couscous and a chickpea puree paired perfectly with Typhoo Moroccan mint green tea. The couscous is spectacularly good. The addition of herbs and grilled veggies raises this humble dish to gourmet levels. And the Moroccan mint green tea adds just the right note with its punch of Moroccan mint. I make a mental note to buy this as soon as possible.



Now it is time for the flavourful main course that Vicky had demonstrated. But the dish that is served to me bears little resemblance to the aromatic dish I had just seen. What I get is a lukewarm, dry chicken breast with a very weak sauce. Sadly I am not able to finish the dish. Things pick up with Park Hotel's chocolate indulgence which is a fine chocolate cakey brownie, and Assam tea.



It has been an interesting afternoon. I never realized that tea, like wine could be paired with food. Appropriately chosen tea not only adds an extra note to the taste of the food, it also cleanses the palate between courses. And unlike wine one can have oodles of tea without being worried about losing one's taste sensation after some time. It is something that is worth trying.

Ratings out of 5

Food: 3.5 | Ambiance: 3.0 | Service: 4.5 | Overall: 3.5

RECIPES BY CHEF VICKY RATNANI

MASALA TEA POACHED CHICKEN/PEPPERED COTTAGE CHEESE, MASALA MASHED POT, PICKLED CUCUMBER RIBBONS

For the harissa paste

Ingredients

Red chillies 1

Smoked paprika ½ teaspoon

Cumin powder 1 teaspoon

Garlic 1 to 2 cloves

Parsley chopped 1 teaspoon

Fresh coriander leaves, chopped 1 teaspoon

Lemon juice 1 teaspoon

Salt, pepper to taste

Olive oil 1 tablespoon

For the grilled veggies

Ingredients

Eggplant 1 medium-sized sliced, 2 cm thick

Red, yellow bell peppers 1 each, cut into 3 cm strips or large squares

Zucchini $\frac{1}{2}$ a medium size, cut into slices lengthwise 2 to 3 cm thick

Yellow squash $\frac{1}{2}$ a medium size, cut into slices lengthwise 2 to 3 cm thick

Method

Using a blender, blitz all the ingredients for the harissa into a smooth paste.

Cut the eggplant and put into a bowl of lightly salted water for 20 minutes. Drain and dab until dry.

Marinate the veggies in the harissa paste.

Cook in a hot oven for 15 minutes or char on a griller. Reserve until needed.

For the cous cous

Ingredients

Cous cous 50 gm

Veg stock 100 ml

Salt, pepper to taste

Olive oil 1 teaspoon

Mint leaves 6 to 7

Rocket leaves/arugula 20 gm

Fresh parsley, chopped 1 teaspoon

Lemon juice 1 teaspoon

Dried apricots 2 each

Pine nuts toasted 1 teaspoon

Method

In a bowl, add the couscous, pour enough hot stock just enough to cover the couscous by 1 cm.

Cover with a tight lid or with plastic wrap for 6 to 7 minutes. This will swell up the grains.

Using a fork, fluff up the couscous.

Blend the rest of the ingredients to a green puree and season to taste. Garnish with diced dried apricots and toasted pine nuts.

For the chickpea puree

Ingredients

Cooked chick peas 1 cup

Cooking liquid $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Salt, pepper to taste

Olive oil 1 teaspoon

Tahina paste 1 teaspoon

Garlic puree $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon

Method

Blend the ingredients until smooth.