

Courtyard at 51

BY NICK PURVES · JULY 25, 2010 · [EMAIL THIS POST](#) · [PRINT THIS POST](#) · [POST A COMMENT](#)



Summer likes to play tricks on us English folk. On most days in the season, you will wake up to cloudless blue skies. As soon as you turn back to dress yourself for good weather, in sneak the clouds. You might notice one or two as you leave the house but convince yourself that there is no need to worry. But by lunchtime, the clouds will have aggregated to leave only miniscule vistas through which the sun can poke out and as you

head home, the sky has taken on a deathly pallor, ruining all those plans you had for a meal outside.

There should be some sub-section of Murphy's Law, the decree that if something can go wrong it will. Entitled English Weather Law, it simply states that if the weather can mess up an event that has been long in the planning, it will.

Such are the conditions that thwart attempts at al fresco dining, that those who endeavour to put on meals in the open are to be heartily congratulated. One of these venues is Courtyard at 51, an open-space area attached to Michelin-starred restaurant the Quilon. Boasting a veranda that looks out onto a fountain and one of the largest Shakespearean friezes in the world, this is a place that manages to combine grandness with a sense of intimacy.

The venue also offers a mixture of food, alternating between Arabian, Moroccan, Lebanese and other barbecue classics. Due to the weather being predictably dank, a group of us headed inside to sample some of the food. Although there were some grumbles amongst us, there are infinitely worse places to retreat to than a Michelin-starred restaurant.

What was put before us was a hybrid menu featuring elements from the a la carte menu, dishes that have a distinct south Indian feel to them. These are ideal for the grills and barbecues that the venue offers, simply for the way in which they are cooked and the effect that this has on the food. By cooking in a way that drains the excess oils, the food is filling but not in a way that leaves you feeling bloated. While it is not possible to describe everything that is on the menu as the lack of space would leave only a cursory glance at each, there are some items that are worthy of comment.

The curry leaf and lentil crusted fish was superbly done, having a fantastic texture as well as being exceedingly flavoursome. Other notable items were the prawns byadgi with the sweetness of the prawns combining excellently with the byadgi chillies and the mapla chicken. The Courtyard will also be hosting opera recitals in the later months of the summer. Hopefully by that time, the weather will have sorted itself out.

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