



Far Left: Wild Madagascan Prawn
Left: King Scallops

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www.darbaarrestaurants.com



Interior

DARBAAR

Reviewed by Michael M Sandwick

Google Maps never functions well in dense urban areas. Such was the case when I walked through Broadgate on my way to Darbaar. I got totally lost. It was wonderful. In December, Broadgate becomes east London's answer to Winter Wonderland. Ice skating rink, outdoor lounges with sheepskins and mulled wine and twinkly lights everywhere. In spite of my Ebenezer-like demeanour, I found myself infused with holiday cheer. Humbug!

We arrived a mere 5 minutes late and received a warm welcome. The bar and private dining rooms are stunning, with the understated promise of a memorable evening. The main dining room is altogether different. The vast space is dominated by a huge open kitchen. It lacks the elegance of the other spaces, but the lotus flower chandeliers are divine.

The menu, created by Chef Abdul Yaseen is inspired by the banquets of the Indian Royal Court. Indeed, the set menu at £65 sounds like dinner with the Raj! 6 courses including

king scallops, royal Madagascan prawns, bream in banana leaf, slow roasted lamb...my tongue was throbbing! So when our waiter informed us that the kitchen would like to order for us, I thought, yeah, bring it on! What they brought however, was clearly for the lesser branch of the royal family.

Our choices of a Lychee chili cocktail (£10.50) and a passion fruit mocktail (£6.50) were both excellent. The cocktail had a fabulous kick. Unfortunately, the drinks arrived about 10 minutes after our appetizer. Our waiter was affable and competent, however the coordination between kitchen, bar and floor was very uneven.

Abdul's platter of assorted grills and kebabs for 2 (£28) was a hefty starter. Paneer, Tandoori salmon, chicken and lamb kofta were all well spiced and served with a spicy raita for dipping. The salmon was overcooked and just fell apart. The paneer was roasted in a turmeric based curry and the finely minced kofta packed with chili. The chicken

won out with a beautiful burst of cardamom.

Our main was butter chicken (£18). With Guinea fowl, rabbit, venison and giant prawns on the menu, this is not what I would have chosen. Especially not at that price. That being said, it was one of the better butter chickens I have had. Chef Yaseen cut his chops at The Cinnamon Club and Kitchen. He knows what he is doing. Served with rice and 2 kinds of excellent naan from the wood fired oven, but not a veg in sight. With so much protein, my digestive system went into overdrive. Did this stop me from ordering 2 desserts? It's my job!!!

Lemon and ginger brûlée with rhubarb compote and a Valrhona dark chocolate and chili brick were both delicious, even without the promised ginger and chili. With these we ordered 2 teas. One arrived before dessert, the other long after.

I believe there is a royal banquet to be had at Darbaar. It might be worth getting lost in Broadgate to find out. ★