



FACTORY BY SUTRA

Comfort Food Redefined

Address SCO-23, Sector 29, Gurgaon
Reservations (0) 92052 49700
Timings 12 noon to midnight
Meal for two ₹1,200 plus taxes (without alcohol)

Industrial chic seems to be the order of the day when it comes to restaurant design, and this new kid on the Sector 29 block in Gurgaon looks and feels every bit like a factory. Exposed pipes, rustic brick work, plenty of ropes on hooks, jute sacks, you get the drift. Factory—from the house of Sutra, a fine-dining gastropub in Cyber City—is a tribute to labourers and factory workers and celebrates the food they eat daily, albeit with a twist, says Abhinav Sharma, corporate chef. If that doesn't sound convincing enough, take a look at the menu. Packed with *desi* favourites alongside the obligatory Chinese dishes and vague mentions of pizza, burgers, quesadillas and pasta, the menu globetrotts giddily, but there's a certain method to the madness.

But first, we must have beer. Did I mention that the place is also home to a microbrewery? We order their craft beer samplers—premium lager, German wheat, Dunkel wheat, dark—and an assortment of appetisers. The dark is my pick, though I quite liked the German wheat as well. It's hard to resist *chaat*, especially when said dish is

a fusion of *gol gappas*, *aloo tikki* and *bhel puri*; the Delhi 6 Golgappas is a revelation, and is as delicious as its description sounds. So is the Kurkuri Bhindi Nachos—crunchy okra tossed with onions and a mint chutney.

The Mutton Keema Lal Maas Pav comes with pillowy soft *pav* buns, perfectly buttered and warm. The *lal maas* itself is nowhere close to the fiery Rajasthani staple, but it's mellowed down to appeal to a subtler Delhi-Gurgaon palate. The Lahori Mutton Curry cooked with *kadha masala* is decidedly mild but the lamb is beautifully cooked. Now, I'm not one to order vegetable *dal khichdi* at a restaurant, but with guilty pleasures being my theme for the night, what with Savage Garden and Boyzone playing in the background, I had to dig into some home-style comfort food, and surprisingly enough, the humble *khichdi* emerged an unlikely hero. Later, we nibbled on the crunchy, buttery edges of our warm cinnamon-crust apple crumble, and downed an Espresso Martini. A Wednesday evening well spent.

—Harini Sriram



PRIZE PLATE

The Lemon and Garlic Fish is full of spirit. Zesty and funky, the fish fillet is dressed with a creamy sauce bursting with predominantly Southeast Asian flavours.



RAASTA

Fun And Soulful

Address 4&5 Floors, Rohan Plaza, Ram Krishan Nagar, Road No. 5, Khar, Mumbai
Reservations (022) 3312 6123
Timings 12 noon to 1 am
Meal for two ₹2,000 with alcohol

Setting up base in a lane that is already packed with pubs and bars, Raasta, the Caribbean-themed lounge that is dedicated to the legendary reggae artiste, Bob Marley, quite easily manages to hold its

own despite strong competition. Comfortable couches, coarse wooden tables with high stools and an easy rustic ambience have Raasta exuding a rather soulful and friendly vibe. Making myself at home

PRIZE PLATE

Sambuca Cajun Grilled Bassa is hands down the most memorable part of my evening. The whole grilled dish served with vegetables had a lasting impression on me or shall be ever living to me, as a true Rastafarian would say.

in a spot that allows me to catch a glimpse of the busy bar and the huge TV screens that will later on air the lyrics for the soon-to-start karaoke evening, I am intrigued to notice the lounge almost packed even on a week night. We embark on our culinary journey at Raasta with a round of beers and some Chicken Faffa. Served with flatbread, the diced chicken is deliciously spiced with green chillies, peppers and a hint of coconut. We then try the Rum Spiked Lamb Bongs which have marbles of double minced lamb bongs that have been cooked just right and tossed with garlic pepper, onions and a hint of rum. While the rum was not easily discernible, the texture of the lamb and the combination of spices did make

it quite enjoyable.

Sampling the chilli garlic prawns was no less of a sensory adventure, given how crunchy the prawns were and how the sauce tasted sweet and spicy at the very same time. At this point the lounge was even more packed and patrons were crooning away to all kinds of music; right from Taylor Swift to even country music, making for a fun and festive atmosphere.

For mains, we could not resist the Jamaican Jerk Chicken, given that jerk is the signature flavour of Jamaica. Marinated with jerk rub and served with a garlic lemon mash, the chicken was delicious but lacked the fiery nature of a typical spiced dish. The Sambuca Cajun Grilled Bassa, on the other hand, was made to perfection and is definitely a must-try. Well satiated after a memorable evening, we decide to skip dessert and come back another day to indulge ourselves.

—Rama Ahuja



BELLA CUCINA

Mamma Mia!

Address Le Meridien Gurgaon, Sector 26, Gurgaon-Delhi Border, MG Road, Gurgaon
Reservations (0124) 4932 007
Timings 12 noon to 3 pm; 7 pm to 11:45 pm
Meal for two ₹4,000 with alcohol

There is a famous Italian saying, *L'appetito vien mangiando*, which means the appetite comes while you're eating—I experienced the same at Bella Cucina. Situated at the lobby level of Le Meridien Gurgaon, the décor is appealing, with fancy kept to a minimum. One might think it is fine-dining, but it is just a casual space offering sumptuous gourmet cuisine where wine keeps flowing.

I sat with ginger gin, while my friend sipped her wine, waiting for what lay ahead. Chef Amit Kumar took us through the menu, but we asked him to lay out his favourites. First was the Cappuccino of Mushroom, served in a cup. Delicious soup topped with a foam

made of mushroom. The Compressed Beet Root Salad with goat cheese snow did not suit our palate, but the smoked chicken salad with avocado mousse and cucumber gel was a delight. The prawn ravioli was among the best I have ever had. The main course was served—Australian Lamb Rack with eggplant tart and creamy spinach, and Chilean Sea Bass served with broccoli purée and coriander vanilla sauce. We shared the main course and the lamb vanished in seconds, while we went slow with the sea bass. We asked for pepperoni pizza and penne with arrabbiata sauce before going our jolly way back after a lovely meal, full and light-headed.

WINNER'S CUP

The Baconizer. Sounds like a dish. But it is a cocktail made with pork fat, washed rum, lemon sugar, sour apple and egg white for the froth. One of the best and most innovative cocktails I have ever tried.

—Anuj Sarma