



# MEXICAN MAGIC

**Asado is a charming new eatery promising Latin-American food (including but not limited to Mexican fare) that quickly became one of Dev Goswami's favourites across the city — after just one meal! Read on to find out why**

Have you ever been caught up in conversation as you're walking into a restaurant or a bar, only to be struck silent the minute you enter and take in your surroundings? If so, you'll understand how I felt when I strolled into Asado, which replaced the much-missed Bembos burger joint. I couldn't hold a conversation any longer and it wasn't because of dark décor that made me watch my step, or loud music that rendered the conversation at hand moot. It's because even if you remember Bembos — you will not recognise this space at all. The interesting, unique décor demands undivided attention, leaving you awestruck as you follow the cobblestoned pathway from the floor to the painted pathways on the wall, survey the street lamp posts, see the lights strung above your head and catch a glimpse of hand-painted locals peeking out of window shutters that are placed on the walls.

Their indoor seating area is filled with hand painted murals and Latin American street scenes. The attention to detail means that even the air conditioners are painted over, which provides a sense of continuity that I was left marvelling at as I sipped on my Latin Sour (₹550), a more potent take on the traditional whiskey sour that also includes brandy and red wine. My dining companion tried the delicious Goonery Goo (₹600), which was the best drink of the night, with a hearty touch of port blending perfectly with dark rum and fruit juices. The beer and rum-based Chilcano (₹550) was another favourite, with a hint of spice and a refreshing fizz.

We started our meal with their Mexican Seafood Soup (₹475). Perfectly flavoured, with abundant servings of seafood that include crab, it's a must-order. The Caramelised Pork Belly Salad

>> While the outdoor seating area is pretty, step inside to see some spectacular Latin American streets handpainted on the wall



(₹525) was also delicious. The crispy pork was heavenly and its caramelised flavour was perfectly balanced by the tart dressing. From their starters, we chose Crispy Calamari (₹385), which was well-prepared, but nothing exceptional and the Chicken & Dates Antichuco (₹425), with bacon. The latter is the perfect dish to try if you're new to Mexican or Latin American food, but with the large variety of meat on offer (including an exorbitantly priced dish with Brazilian beef), I would recommend skipping the chicken.

The Cheese Dates & Nuts Empanda (₹325), which we tried next, was a big hit with my dining companion, but it's an acquired taste. The Pork Ribs (₹900) were the star of the night — I'm still drooling over the mere thought of them. Melt-in-your-mouth and coated with the just the right amount of sauce, they were well-barbecued. But, beware, you're going to be tempted to stuff yourself with more than you can eat! The Edamame Truffle Risotto (₹849) was

another hit; so much so that even though I am not big on risotto, I polished off half — half, because I was still full from the ribs.

We finished our dinner with the Mexican classic Tres Leches (₹375), which was the perfect way to end our meal. Asado impressed me on all counts. It immediately raises expectations and manages to fulfil them through your meal. The prices are very high, but while the drinks are slightly overpriced, you won't resent them as much for being heavy-on-the-pocket if you stick to the food. With friendly staff and some gorgeous décor, you can tell that you're paying a little extra for the unique experience you will have here. We're eager to go back already!

**Where** Asado, Manorama Chambers, SV Road, Near Bandra Talkies, Bandra (w)  
**Alcohol** Yes (pint of beer: ₹325 onwards)  
**Meal for two** ₹4,000  
**Contact** 65686666

# A SLICE OF ART

**Indulge... Cakes, Chocolates & More combines a passion for painting and baking. Rhea Dhanbhoora tells you about a sweet treat that you're going to want to admire before you eat**

Thin black lines veined across the glossy top. The colours stared at me, perfectly blended, and reminiscent of a window in an old, glass house. I could have been staring at a sheet of stained glass — so, of course, I had to poke my finger in, just to check. A gooey, sticky ganache was lifted off the top of the massive, layered cake, which was decorated to resemble (you guessed it) stained glass. Yes, a cake with a stunning design, created by Bhavna Bhayani.

I had trouble carrying it and when I dug in, I realised it wasn't because of my scrawny arms but because of the layers sandwiched together. As someone who bakes, the first thing that impressed me even before I tasted it was how well all those layers were held up together, without being dry and cardboard-like. It wasn't flimsy; each slice could be cut into the perfect triangle and eaten without damaging most of the tall layered look.



After admiring it for a while and then swirling the buttercream around, just to see how it blended in (the icing is made well enough to set and hold its own, so while the cake may slip and slide, your design won't), and sneaking a swipe of ganache, I got down to slicing and digging in. It passed my no-gelatine test, it didn't taste like a ready-mix and although it was strawberry-flavoured, the mousse-like texture in between the layers reminded me of coffee bite toffees — not that I'm complaining. I wouldn't go so far as to say it was a stellar cake; the icing was a little too sweet and the cake was good, but not something I'd rave about.

However, I know how important it is to set everything so that the icing and design takes centre stage and all things considered, the cake passed the taste test. I was also pleasantly surprised that it was eggless, which is a good thing. Bhavna's creations run around a yellow, purple, red, orange, green and blue hue palette, which makes sense with her floral subjects. While at ₹1,000 per kg it's not overpriced, don't kid yourself into thinking that you can order less than 2kg. Like most decorated cakes, the bigger it is, the more room there is for the artwork. If you want the creation to look great, go ahead and order one that's around 6-8 inches tall, and will weigh around 4-5kg. Bhavna also conducts classes, so if you think you're ready to put your artistic skills to the test... you know who to call!

>> Bhavna's painted cakes stand at heights as dizzying as 8 feet tall!



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