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Observer **Weekend**

THURSDAY, JAN 29-FEB 4, 2015

APPS & ALL ABOUT GROUPS

- Confessions of a food connoisseur
- Souq Waqif: The Heart of Doha
- Chinese tea sommelier dazzles



Struggle of an
autism child, mom

Confessions of a FOOD CONNOISSEUR

A British professor recounts his gourmet experience in Oman. Jonathan Waxman, Professor of Oncology at Imperial College London and founder and president of The Prostate Cancer Charity is a frequent visitor to Oman. The country has been so alluring to him that he and his partner, Naomi Heaton, CEO of London Central Portfolio and another frequenter to this country, spent their honeymoon in Muscat last year.

Jonathan helped establish the All-party Parliamentary Group on Cancer, the organisation behind the Britain Against Cancer movement. He has also written a medical law book, several novels and a book of short stories entitled *The Elephant In The Room*. His style is certainly refreshingly different!

We recently had the pleasure of dining at the Qureshi Restaurant, and it was fabulous. The restaurant is located in the newly opened Hormuz Hotel, which has been built near to the airport at Muscat, to service the expansion of Oman's airport as it comes on line. The development is prescient and will clearly fill the market need for a hotel in this dynamic area.

The dining area of the Qureshi restaurant combines modern and classical Indian design. The kitchen area is adjacent to the dining room. A lattice screen both hides and exposes the kitchen, where staff can be seen preparing food. Ceiling lights are classic Indian lanterns and provide a muted illumination that is restful and peaceful. The tables are well spaced, on a floor of an extraordinary black and white Italian marble; a floor that should a visitor not be able to find a table, alone makes it worthwhile visiting Qureshi!

On to the food! Oh the food! The cuisine is from Lucknow, in Northern India. The principle features of Lucknow cooking are that food is prepared slowly, and that the cooking pots are covered with bread. As a result flavours are sealed in and a fragrant and delicate cuisine results.

We had a tasting menu that would have graced any Michelin starred restaurant in London or Milan. We started with a dish of mutton seekh kebab, murg

Peshwari Tikka and char grilled Malai prawns. The mutton was skewered, minted, spice crusted and cooked in a tandoori oven. The chicken tikka was minted, marinated in spices and curds, and finished in a tandoori oven. The prawns were indescribably delicious and crusted with yoghurt, saffron and remarkably... cheddar cheese, and then char grilled. This was an eleven out of ten starter!

A broth followed, of lamb trotters flavoured with coriander, cloves and cardamom, and pepped up with a wizard's wand benison of chilly. A ten out of ten dish. Most unusual and very delicate.

We were full at this point but pressed on regardless of our coronary arteries, and with great self-sacrifice, soldiered on with fine table manners and no use of our fingers, though a munificent feast.



Jonathan Waxman



Our next course was slow cooked lamb shank, mildly spiced, tender meat that flaked from the bone, smoked chicken finished in cashew nut and tomato curry, and prawns simmered in coconut cream and spices, too delicious for our knives and forks to falter. Another ten out of ten course.

Then almost finally the last course, for which we really did need an extra stomach, a burrani raita, the chef's keynote dish, which is a feast day special of rice and lamb. Yet another ten out of ten bestowed upon.....and emerging from behind the screens, summoned by the rattling applause of the gathered rotund gourmands, came Ashish and Imran Qureshi, executive chef and chef de cuisine, who welcomed us and thanked us, and wanted to give us more food, but sadly we were completely stuffed and so protested to these two fine men that we would have need to rest for a week before eating out again.



DAL QURESHI

Ingredients

2/3 cup Whole Urad dal
3 1/2 tsp Ginger paste
3 1/2 tsp Garlic paste
120 ml Tomato puree
1 tsp Red chilli pd.
1/2 cup White butter
1/2 cup Cream

By Mohammed Ashfaque Qureshi,
*Executive Chef, Qureshi Restaurant,
Hormuz Grand Hotel*

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 3 hours

Preparation

The Lentils: Pick, wash in running water and soak overnight. Drain.

Cooking

Put the drained lentils in a handi, add salt and water (approx. 6 cups) bring to boil, cover and simmer until the lentils are cooked and two-thirds of the liquid has evaporated. Mash the lentils lightly against the sides with a wooden spoon. Add ginger paste, garlic paste, tomato puree, red chillies and 7 Tbs of butter, stir and cook for 45 minutes. Then add cream, stir and cook for 10 minutes. Adjust the seasoning.

To Serve

Remove to a bowl, garnish with remaining butter and serve with tandoori roti.