

A restaurant with some truly original dishes you are unlikely to find elsewhere

An enticing array of very individual Indian flavours can be found at this delightful restaurant

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Kari Indian restaurant in Inchicore, Dublin. Photograph: Killian Broderick

Corinna Hardgrave

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Kari



Address: 205 Emmet Road, Inchicore, Dublin 8

Telephone: 01 549 9221

Cuisine: Indian

Website: <https://www.kari.ie/>

Cost: €€€

I try to be careful about the use of the word curry, which carries colonial and imperial connotations. It is thought to have originated from the Tamil

word “kari”, spoken in the southern part of India, where, according to Colleen Taylor Sen in *Curry: A Global History*, it denotes a spiced dish of sautéed vegetables and meat.

It is traditionally not used by Indians, who refer to dishes by their names, vindaloo, korma, and rogan josh, for instance. In 1974, Madhur Jaffrey wrote that it was as degrading to use the word curry in relation to Indian food as it was to use chop suey for Chinese food. Although in 2003, Jaffrey released the *Ultimate Curry Bible*, an indication of how broadly the word is now used.

I am fascinated by the food of India but have only visited Mumbai and Bengaluru so far. Conscious of this enormous continental gap in my food knowledge, I am joined for dinner by my food writer chum, Vritti Bansal, not just for her incredible understanding of Indian food, but also for her lovely company.

Kari is the new Inchicore restaurant from Bala Nayak and Nidhi Joshi, the husband-and-wife team who opened Konkan on Dublin’s Clanbrassil Street in 2004, and a second branch in Dundrum in 2011. While the food leans toward the south of India, where Nayak is from, it also has dishes from other regions, with some creative slants to bring an individual take.

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Vritti immediately picks up on some of the dishes she has not had before on the specials and starter section – duck samosa (€8.50); kale and samphire pakoras (€8.50); and crab and prawn kebabs (€10.90), from a list of 13 options. We order an Indian cobbler (€10.90), a sangria like cocktail of red wine, peach schnapps and soda, and a pint of Tiger beer (€7.90).



While the food leans toward the south of India, it also has dishes from other regions, with some creative slants to bring an individual take. Photograph: Killian Broderick

Three piping hot samosas are stuffed solidly with roast duck, with flavours of star anise and cumin, and a bit of heat on the finish. The pastry is crispy and delicious, to be dipped in the tamarind and ginger chutney dusted with crushed sev, which Vritti tells me is made from fried chick pea noodles.

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The kebabs are more similar to crab cakes; golden on top, light and open textured, although precariously crumbly, sitting on a base of shredded cabbage. The spicing is clever and doesn't overwhelm the crab, and the sauce on the side goes wonderfully with it, made from a mix of coconut, ginger, garlic, fresh green chillies, curry leaves, cumin, turmeric and black mustard seeds.

The bright-green battered and deep-fried kale and samphire pakora is scattered with jewelled pomegranate seeds, bringing pops of sweetness to the salty and cruciferous earthy notes, anchored with a creamy sauce of ginger, garlic, cumin, turmeric, dried mango powder and fennel seeds.

There's nothing repetitive about the saucing of any of these dishes; they are all quite individual. This continues for our main course, Goan pork vindaloo (€20.50), which we've ordered spicy, and it comes perhaps more for the Irish palate; certainly not made with 42 red chillies, the hottest one Vritti has encountered over the years. It is tempered with turmeric rice that is served on the side. Vritti remarks on the amount of ghee in the rice, it reminds her of her home in New Delhi and tastes like her grandmother's, although she adds a bit of sugar to make it a comfort dish.

Blistered garlic naan (€3.75) and vegan paratha (€3.50) come with our other main course, Kerala lamb and potato stew (€19.50), although Vritti tells me that these dishes are traditionally eaten with a hopper rather than naan in southern India. It is a milder dish, a thick creamy sauce flavoured with coconut milk, cinnamon, cardamom, black pepper and fresh green chillies, served with steamed rice.



There is nothing repetitive about the saucing of any of the dishes at Kari. Photograph: Killian Broderick

For dessert, it's gajar ka halwa (€5.90), which is like a hot steamed pudding with grated carrot, drizzled with syrup. Again, this is a dish Vritti is familiar with, it's quite similar to how her grandmother makes it and is delicious with a scoop of vanilla ice-cream.

Kari is a delightful restaurant with some truly original dishes that are full of bright, vibrant flavours that you are unlikely to find elsewhere. It's a smart room with a nice sense of community, and I can imagine it is as full at lunchtime for the €16.50 thali, as it is when we visit on a sunny Thursday evening.

Dinner for two with a cocktail and beer was €100.25.

The Verdict: Deliciously creative Indian dishes.

Music: Jazz in the background.

Food provenance: Doyles Seafood, Silverhill duck, meat from Edmond Lloyd & Sons, chicken and pork are not free-range; Nugents Fresh

Produce.

Vegetarian options: Papri chaat, kulcha and paneer makhana, plus vegan options of kale and samphire pakoras, gobi 65, soya saag, cauliflower and potato gassi, and tarka dal.

Wheelchair access: Accessible with an accessible toilet.



Corinna Hardgrave

Corinna Hardgrave, a contributor to The Irish Times, writes a weekly restaurant column



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