

It's back on the

BIGBITE

Paul Fulford

BLUE MANGO,

REGENCY WHARF, BROAD ST, BIRMINGHAM B1 2DS. 0121 633 4422.

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VERDICT: ★★☆☆



THERE are some restaurants that seem to slip off the radar.

Not because there's been anything wrong with the food or service there, but, I guess, simply because this city now has so many great places to eat that it's difficult to remember them all.

Or difficult for someone like me whose mind has been added by decades of alcohol.

Thus many years had passed since I'd last eaten at Blue Mango, a place with a profile not helped by its location in a courtyard tucked away behind Broad Street.

It's a pleasant place to sit – ornate, but not in a vulgar sort of way.

There's a long and seemingly under-used bar which my friend surveyed and suggested would, in its own right, make a great destination for cocktails.

As it was, we drank (on a midweek night that should have been nowhere near as boozy) sauvignon blanc, shiraz, cabernet sauvignon and shiraz/cabernet blend supplied by Soul Tree Wines, a Birmingham-based company with vineyards in India.

They showed up well against food that was confidently but deftly spiced.

The starters here were particularly well received.

The Punjabi samosa that I ordered was an impressive thing, far removed from the dull sort served at so many curry houses.

Robust pastry was stuffed with potatoes and peas and came with a tamarind sauce and hung curd that neatly balanced sweet, sour and soothing dairy notes.

My guest, meanwhile, was pleased by dosa – those delightful rice flour pancakes – that were thin, crisp and enlivened by fresh coconut and tomato chutney.

Both starters were substantial, but no food remained uneaten by the time the table was cleared and, like the young Sebastian and Charles in a particularly bibulous part of *Brideshead Revisited*, we set about the serious business of trying to remember which glass contained which wine.

It was a conundrum that was largely solved by the time we'd had a short break and main courses were brought to our table.

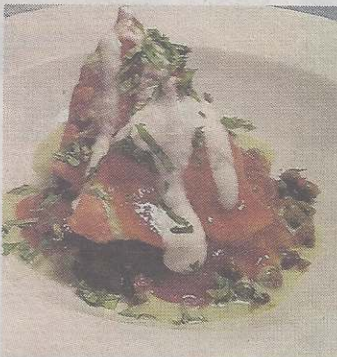
Perhaps we'd been feeling overly peckish when we placed our order, perhaps we were simply being greedy, but the table virtually groaned by the time all the dishes arrived.

Odd as it might sound, my favourite thing was a basket of various flatbreads that were flavoursome and freshly made.

Kori gassi – a chicken dish



■ The plush interior of Blue Mango.



■ Samosa, dosa and chicken.



from the southern coast of India – was fragrant with coriander seeds and sweetly zingy with fresh coconut, with an underlying current of chilli adding a touch of fire.

Nihari lamb – a richer, more robust dish – was a little mooted in comparison, I thought.

And both, were I to be very critical, contained meat that was slightly dry, perhaps through over-cooking.

A bowl of pillau rice, the grains admirably separate,

provided further ballast.

Needless to say, desserts went unorderd for the food had been extremely filling.

Service through the meal was efficient and friendly and there was in the restaurant a good buzz, though it was far from full.

With pride I can say that not all four bottles of wine were finished by the time we left.

It is with less pride that I reveal we disappeared to a nearby bar to drink whisky.

Three



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