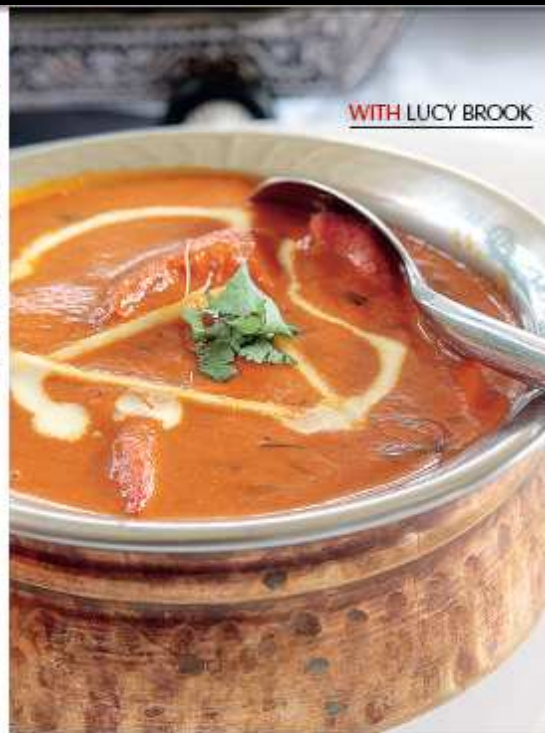




cafe **tn**



WITH LUCY BROOK

SPICE TRAIL ... simple surrounds allow the food, such as this aromatic butter chicken, to shine. Photographs // Richard Waugh

A real Goa

Overlook the décor and step inside this Indian eatery for a fresh, authentic curry experience

Indian food is either spectacularly good or absolutely dismal, and with this in mind a few friends and I ventured to Upper Mount Gravatt and Southern Spice Fine Indian Cuisine. It's a family-owned and -operated business specialising in the cuisine of India's southern and coastal states.

First impressions do count when dining out, and we were all a little underwhelmed by the tired, almost bleak interior. The eatery doesn't feel cosy or inviting, which isn't the end of the world, although turning up the music and some flattering lighting would help to brighten it up.

But when it comes to the crunch, it's all about the food, and there is plenty to choose from on Southern Spice's extensive menu. We sifted through the pages and eventually settled on a selection of curries, but couldn't resist starting with a dosai, a popular Indian crepe made with rice and lentils, which is also the house speciality.

There is more than one type of dosai, but we kept it simple with the Mysore plain dosai (\$11.50), which comes with a side of spiced chutney. Our waiter asked the chef to slice our serving into four pieces, and we were all pleasantly surprised. Although the dosai itself was rather bland, it had a surprising texture and the spiced chutney was to die for.

The four curries – the lamb saag (\$17.70), butter

chicken (\$17.20), vegetable korma (\$15.20) and prawn masala (\$19.90) – arrived and although the servings appeared to be meagre, it turned out there was more than enough food to go around, and we struggled to get through it all.

The lamb, cooked in spinach gravy, was rich and spicy but not overwhelmingly so. The meat was melt-in-your-mouth tender and worked beautifully with the plain basmati rice (\$3 small). The butter chicken wasn't sweet or bright orange like I've been served in the past, but was aromatic and fresh, with tender meat and plenty of flavour.

We all adored the vegetable korma, which was crammed with lentils and fresh vegies cooked in a creamy cashew sauce, while the prawn masala packed plenty of spice.

All the curries are made to order – no bulk cooking – so waiting times can vary. The night we visited was fairly quiet and so our meals came quickly. The waiter was friendly and more than happy to guide us through the menu's many pages.

Southern Spice is not your standard Indian takeaway – the food is incredibly fresh and made with care, while the staff are passionate about their fare and will go that extra mile to ensure you know what you're ordering. For southsiders, it's well worth a visit, and for fans of true Indian cuisine, this is the place to try.

SOUTHERN SPICE

2000 Logan Rd, Upper Mount Gravatt. Ph: 3343 5435.
Chefs: Gopinath Krishnamoorthy & Thirumugham Sundaram.
Owners: Prashant Kumar & Abhishek Kumar.
Lunch, Wed-Sun; dinner, daily.
Licensed. Major cards & Eftpos.
Wheelchair access.
Off-street parking.
FOOD // 7 DRINKS // 7
SERVICE // 8 AMBIENCE // 5.5