

weep for this poor Tsar



"Quite simply, a terrific restaurant": Nikita's has limitless food, friendly service and reasonable prices

FROM the utterly ridiculous to the totally sublime, when it comes to Russian food, a thankfully short journey — about four miles, in fact, from Portland Place to Fulham — home of that little gem NIKITA'S. The very moment you enter the bar upstairs, to be greeted by a friendly face and good balalaika music, the soul, ravaged by the Tsar Bar, begins to be refreshed.

The downstairs area, where the eating takes place, is small, unusually pretty and a touch Bohemian in aura: the ornate wallpaper comes in rich blacks, pinks and bordeaux reds, the antique lights have spider markings, and the lighting is predominantly by candle. The tables are few (it seats only 35), but there are a couple of tables private, which are great for private parties.

I remember one, about five years ago, involving so much flavoured vodka — Boris Yeltsin himself might have struggled — that when, in the early hours of the next morning, the roof hatch blew off during a storm, I contrived to stay asleep for five hours while lying, unprotected, beneath a ferocious stream of rain.

This time, that hangover barely faded from the memory, we stuck primarily to the house white and concentrated on the food. Another crack at the Borzchi Ukrainski (even the spellings here look more authentic) cast grave doubts on my new diaspora theory, the soup being thick, creamy and above all richly flavoured with beetroot. Another soup, a spicy prawn bisque called Ribnaya Belanka, was equally delicious, while here the Sevruska caviar is sensibly priced at £20.00, and comes with crisp, light and altogether perfect blinis.

From a small but well-balanced list of

Four miles and a world of difference

entrées, one friend went for Goluptsy, another Ukrainian dish of cabbage parcels stuffed with spiced beef, herbs and dried fruits; the other, slices of roast duck served in a rich and splendid cherry sauce with lots of cherries served on top. Both were thrilled with what they had, as I was with lamb shashlik, a thick bit of perfectly pink, high-quality meat, charcoal grilled and forked onto the plate from a flaming skewer. The vegetables — sauté potatoes, broccoli and red cabbage — were also faultless, something by no means to be taken for granted with Eastern European cuisine.

The portions here are enormous, so we were forced to split one pudding between the three of us — a creation called Vlahi Krem, a Russian concoction of cream-butter that was magnificent. With water and a few vodkas to sample, the bill came to a little over £30 a head without service.

This is, quite simply, a terrific restaurant, run by people who know how to do the simple things well (as they should after 30 years of ownership), and staffed by smartly dressed waiters who are particularly friendly — one was very sweet with a small girl at the next table — without being familiar. Throw in the gay singing folk songs and playing Russian classics on his organ, and Nikita's jollity becomes irresistible.

If the management of the Langham Hilton should develop the urge to make a few changes, and fancy a little practical research, I would be delighted to send them a letter to cover the lead here to Fulham.

Nikita is at 42 Finsbury Road, SW9 0JH (0171 322 6203). Evenings only.

Pictures by **DANNY ELWES**

RESTAURANT GUIDE
To Advertise
Call 0171 628 7224

Continental Noodle

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP
Tel: 0171 734 0222

Le Tote

21 Regent St, W1B 3EJ
Tel: 0171 734 0222

Khana of Knowledge

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP
Tel: 0171 734 0222

Le Tote & Le Continental

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP
Tel: 0171 734 0222

Maharani Indian

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP
Tel: 0171 734 0222

Mahabharata Indian

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP
Tel: 0171 734 0222

Teppan for £10
Monday to Friday (pm 12-7pm)

FIVE COURSES:

- Teriyaki Chicken
- Japanese Onion Soup
- Benihana Salad
- Hibachi Vegetables
- Boiled Rice

Scaling at £10 per person

BENIHANA

Portobello, Chelsea, Soho, Coventry

0171 628 2028 0171 628 7799 0171 628 7799 0171 584 9928

HAIR LOSS SCALP PROBLEMS

42 years experience. National clinics. 12 different treatment methods. Free Medical Doctors and Hair Specialist Tests.

H.T.C. POLICY
We give you a free advice and listen to your needs, inform you of the most suitable treatment and take into account your budget. This way a satisfactory answer to your problem may be found.

TREATMENTS AVAILABLE

- Top-Medic: Hair and scalp problems and hair growth stimulant solution.
- Scalp-Medic: Transplants and micro grafts.
- Hair-Medic: Reproduction hair growth.
- Corona-Catalin: Hair growth on balding areas.

FREE ADVISE: Hair to be treated, hair to be transplanted.

18 James Street W1P 0JH, Portobello Street
Tel: 0171 628 4991

Maharani Ltd

Indian Restaurant and Bar

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP

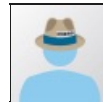
100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP

100 Tottenham Court Road, W1P 0LP

Fay Maschler is on holiday

Nikita's Standard



Clipped By:
ianlharris
Sat, Oct 14, 2023