

Slow cooked to perfection

Journey across the Telugu states with this eight-course dinner at an exclusive chef's table



Rose toddy gummy & Sunnundalu cake

IT'S NOT EVERYDAY that one gets to see the chef in action, whipping up delights while engaging you in conversations about where the produce was procured, complex techniques that go into plating a dish and innumerable life stories. At ROCH Chef's Table by chef Rohit Chidurala, we experienced this and much more over an eight-course tasting menu dinner that reimagined Telugu cuisine in a chic, gourmet avatar.

With admissions through reservations only, the cosy 10-seater space is centered around the chef's



Sarvapindi tartlet

counter, where one gets to see all their dishes being plated.

As goes the tradition in Telangana, we were offered a glass of toddy upon entering. The twist? The toddy is pasteurised, making it devoid of any alcoholic content, blended with strawberry to make a refreshing beverage.

For the *amuse-bouche*, we were served the *Sarvapindi* tartlet, with yoghurt gel, banana chilli, grilled chicken and peanut *parmesan*. While the initial bite immediately reminded us of the



Strawberry toddy

crispy savoury snack, the banana chilli added a surprising sweetness to the bite.

The *Mackerel makka vada* with a creamy corn custard and *gongura* gel was a sight to behold. One bite in, and it offered a myriad of textures, with the creaminess from the custard cutting through the crunch of the *vada*, while the *gongura* completely dominated the flavour profile later on.

From appetisers, the *Rasam chawanmushi* featured black onion



Paan taco

paste that was slow cooked for a whopping four weeks, that rendered it a funky, deeply *umami* flavour. Served with a *rasam*-flavoured light custard that was delicious and a chilli foam that packed in a punch, the dish was a masterclass in layering local flavours with Japanese techniques.

Between courses, we were served the *Gongura* flower *granita*, a sweet, zingy change that cut through the richness of the previous dishes. The courses are spaced out, with ample opportunity to speak with other guests at the table.

The main course featured Mutton neck with toddy *brioche* and *Kalinkaya* rice with a herb curry and beetroot *purée*. Every element on the plate was easily noticeable, each offering a different texture and flavour profile. The star, however, was the mutton neck with incredibly soft meat cooked to a crisp.

Dessert was the highlight of our meal, with the *Payasam* custard tart served with a *bobbattu* cream and strawberry *pod*. While

payasam got a continental avatar, turned into a cheesecake-like consistency, the *bobbattu* cream was deeply resonant of Telugu festivals at home.

The *Petit Fours* featured the *Sunnundalu* cake, taking the everyday *laddoo* found in Telugu homes and flipping it into a gourmet bake. The fluffy sponge layered with the aromatic caramel-like cream of *Sunnundalu* made our journey through the two Telugu states absolutely decadent.

Meal for two: ₹7,000++.

Wednesdays & Sundays, 7 pm.

At Kondapur.

— Jagruthi Maddela

indulge@

newindianexpress.com

@indulgexpress



Mackerel makka vada



Assortment of cold cuts and cheeses

WITH HYDERABAD'S SKYLINE stretching beyond the glass and Durgam Cheruvu shimmering below, Sunday lunch at Ottimo Cucina Italiana begins on a rather picturesque note. But it is the food that keeps the afternoon going. The *Panoramic Sunday Brunch* brings together an indulgent Italian spread, from *antipasti* and artisanal pastas to pizzas, roasts, *risottos* and a generous dessert selection.

We started with *Pasta e ceci*, a comforting vegetarian chickpea

cuisine
Ciao chow
An afternoon of Italian flavours, leisurely plates and postcard-worthy views over the city



Hazelnut and chocolate gelato

and pasta soup served with breads and breadsticks. The *antipasti* that followed offered plenty of variety. *Fritto misto* brought together octopus, squid and prawns in a light, crisp batter, while the caramelised fig with truffle *mascarpone* paired jammy sweetness with creamy richness. The poached prawn with melon *gazpacho*, presented in a scallop shell, was another interesting combination, with a delicately cooked prawn sitting atop a smooth, refreshing melon *purée*.

What is an Italian brunch without pizza? The *Margherita* arrived with a thin, soft crust, a well-balanced tomato sauce and just the right amount of cheese. We also built our own *charcuterie* plate, pairing *camembert*, *grana padano*, *pecorino romano*, *mozzarella* and cheddar with figs, dried apricots and grapes. *Mortadella*, chicken salami, pepperoni and other cold cuts rounded it off.

The mains moved from buffet roasts to made-to-order pastas and *risottos*. The *Chicken diavola* was succulent and packed with roasted flavour, while the braised leg of lamb was tender and hearty. The *Rigatoni al sugo* was perfectly al



Chicken ravioli

dente, the chicken *ravioli* in chicken and basil broth was creamy and decadent, and the *Risotto funghi misti*, rich with mushrooms, was just right for the rainy weather.

Dessert was a spread of its own, with *bombolini*, flaky apple strudel, hazelnut and chocolate gelato and a standout *tiramisu* that was soft, creamy and indulgent. Finished with coffee and that expansive view, it made for an

unhurried Sunday well spent.

Meal for one: ₹2,799++.

Every Sunday, 12.30 pm to 4 pm.

At Ottimo Cucina Italiana,

ITC Kohlenur, Madhapur

— Isha Parvatiyar

isha.p

@newindianexpress.com

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Fusilli in trapanese pesto