

January 17, 2010

**ALSO TRY**

Daawat (above), 358 Victoria St, Richmond, 9429 1857. Daily, dinner.

The room is basic but the food is anything but. Lamb features in many of the Hyderabadi specials: try the biryani with complex spice blend and the lukhmi, minced lamb in puffed chickpea batter.

Namaste Nepal, 4/91a Boronia Road, Boronia, 9762 0057. Tues-Sun, dinner.

The most popular dishes at this simple eat-in and takeaway restaurant are the bhuteko khasi (fried goat with ginger, garlic and fresh coriander) and the creamy chicken curry. Momos (steamed dumplings) come in meat and vegetarian versions.

Misht, 245 Glen Huntly Road, Elsternwick, 9528 6008. Wed-Mon, dinner.

Open a year now, Misht isn't doing the same old Indian schtick. Look for dishes such as chicken pepper masala with curry leaves and mustard seeds, kheema hara dhanias (minced lamb curry with egg) and gajar halwa, a grated carrot pudding.

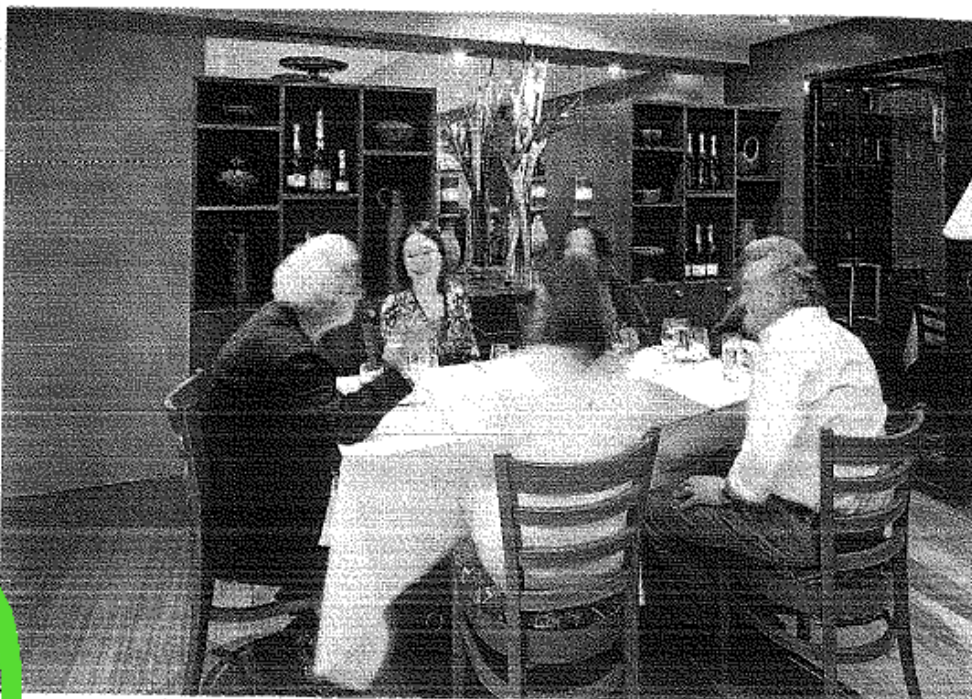
INDULGE**Eight-grain porridge**

David Zhou, owner of Oriental Teahouse and David's Restaurant, is enjoying an eight-grain porridge that his mother, Ya, makes for him most mornings. "It's made with black sticky rice, red beans, buckwheat, fresh corn-kernels, barley, millet, wheat and foxnut," he says. "She cooks it with plenty of water and rock sugar." Zhou says it's a detoxifying dish that works as an antidote to greasy, fatty foods. "It's alkaline, like a medicine," he says. "I feel like it balances the body. It makes me feel good, it makes me feel cleaner."

THE SERVE

THIS WEEK: SUBCONTINENTAL

Restaurant reviews by **Dani Valent**

**☆☆☆ Araliya**

19 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, 9818 5120
Licensed AE MC V Eftpos
Daily 6pm-10.30pm; Thurs & Fri noon-3pm
Entrees \$15-\$23, mains \$24-\$36, desserts \$13-\$15

When it's good, Sri Lankan food is a sensory whirl. Fragrant wafts herald pretty dishes splashed with bright colours. Curries are augmented by spice rubs and sambals making for deep, complex flavours. There's a textural balance of succulent and crisp. The only sensory experience that's lacking is aural but at Araliya the sound barrier is smashed by a rolling chorus of "yum". The food is seriously delicious.

Owner/chef Sriyan "Sam" Wedande melds traditional Sri Lankan cooking and French technique, a legacy of his time in five-star hotels. He trained in hotel management and cookery in Sri Lanka, worked as a chef in London, then

moved to Australia in 1981 where he ran banquets at the Hilton and cooked for Frank Sinatra, Charles and Di, and Tina Turner. Wedande and his wife, Dee, who runs the restaurant floor, opened Araliya in 1985 with an international menu; it gradually became a Sri Lankan showcase.

Wedande keeps an eye on the contemporary scene: his mindset is modern, his presentation polished. The spice-crusting fish (blue eye when I visited) exemplifies his approach. It's based on ambul thiyal, a slow-cooked sour curry that employs the preserving qualities of tamarind but cooks fish to mush. In Wedande's clever version, he makes the ambul thiyal sauce with fish bones and roasts the fish separately to just-cooked firmness. The fish is then served over the strained sauce with coconut chutney. The cinnamon chicken uses free-range poultry while also nodding to Sri Lankan smoke-preserving traditions. Wedande smokes breast on the bone with cinnamon bark and

cardamom oven, and stock cooking special.

Dee Wedande's advice on she steers with the excellent team is faithful rather a w the day th precision. the spray-within spr

Araliya cocktails, rooms) m with an et first rate a effort and my "yum"

Tips and pai