

# Running the gamut with round two

## NEW RESTAURANT

**Skyve**  
10 Winsted Road  
Block 6 #01-17  
Tel: 6225-6690

THEY made a name for themselves for their masterful *sous vide* dishes when that cooking trend was scorching hot last year. But now that the French trend for vacuum packing and cooking food in a low-temperature water bath over a long period has become commonplace on most restaurant menus, the people behind Table 66 are notably graduating to more ambitious pursuits.

Co-founders Celine Tan and Vincent Teng's sophomore effort is a casual bistro triple the size of Table 66's Tan Street showpiece space. And from serving modern Continental dishes only for lunch and dinner at Table 66, food offerings at Skyve now run the gamut. Breakfast served for early birds from 8.30am, lunch, dinner, weekend brunch and bar nibbles – the 17-page menu caters to various food cravings across various times of the day.

The interior, too, reflects the expanded

target clientele: chic Tiffany blue seats for the ladies who lunch, an outdoor swing, whimsical rocking chairs and long wooden benches in a sparse, pram-friendly lounge for weekend family gatherings; and a glassy wine cellar stocking over 70 labels for business-types looking for a nightcap.

Menu sections have skiving-related names such as "The Sluggish Lunch" and "The Dilly Daily Appetizers", and the menu's design resembles an academic thesis, inspired by the location's previous life as the campus of the now-defunct Monk's Hill Secondary School.

The signature dishes carried over from Table 66 reliably impress. The *sous vide* egg benedict starter (\$18) was precision cooked to a custard-like consistency and came conveniently cradled on a meaty portobello mushroom cap. Crunchy spinach leaves, chewy brie ham strands and confit cherry tomatoes rounded out the party of textures.

Of A-grade, too, is the seared beef tartare (\$22). The robust fragrance of the truffle miso-infused egg yolk that seductively wiggles apart the meat strikes a winning first impression. The choice to pan sear

the raw beef mince on both sides lent the dish an alluring depth in terms of taste and texture. In keeping with its casual bistro surrounds, the Skyve incarnation of chef Teng's trademark starter courses with bruschetta on the side, which diners can use – with their hands – to sponge up the meat melange.

The *sous vide* log of duck confit main course (\$34) scores the requisite points for its fall-off-the-bone succulence and lusty golden skin (bonus marks for the distinct crackle on each bite). However, the extremely generous helping of caramelised carrot and potato chunks was a little earthy for the already rather rich dish, which could have used the addition of some lighter greens.

A few of the new dishes intrigued, such as the vegetarian beef burger (\$30). It had the chownow of a regular meat patty but is fashioned entirely out of beef root and TVP, a soya-based vegetable protein. The smoky sweetness of the grilled patty is reminiscent of *char sui* and will entice even resolute carnivores.

But chef Teng, a fine dining veteran formerly of My Dining Room and the Scarlet



The *sous vide* crispy pork belly (\$34) was brittle though not as cracking as advertised and slightly dry, and its potato and apple gratin had a sweet crunch but not enough to counter its heaviness. Likewise, the *sous vide* tender chicken (\$32) was done to textbook springiness but a meat as common as chicken could have used a more innovative hand flavour-wise.

Laudable desserts were the creme caramel (\$12), in which jolly blobs of sweet French Sauterne wine zested up an enjoyably lush vanilla custard; and the pillow mango and mascarpone ivory dome (\$12) served with passion fruit jelly and mango lime salad, which made for a refreshing final punctuation to a strapping meal.

If hearty dishes and a lazy, laid-back dining experience are what you are looking for, then Skyve, true to its name, delivers on all counts.

Rating: 6.5/10  
By Debbie Yong



Sophomore effort: Skyve (above) is a casual bistro carrying over signature dishes such as the duck leg confit (top left) which scores on succulence

# Good food, good value

**Zaffron Kitchen**  
135/137 East Coast Road  
Tel: 6440 6786

THE thing about eating Indian in Singapore is that while Southern Indian food is usually pegged at local hawkker food prices, Northern Indian fare tends to be much more "upper class" in its pricing and setting.

That scenario is slowly changing with more restaurants offering Northern Indian cuisine in accessible venues and pricing, especially with newcomers such as Zaffron on the block.

Zaffron is Jarrod Seah's answer to overpriced Indian food in formal settings, and it's also his and his uncle's third Indian food concept since 2009. The duo set up First Gourmet in 2009, with a concept such as Prata Walk, a chain stall at food courts, and Ottoman Kebab & Grill at Marina Bay Sands.

With the intention to "take Indian food to another level", they've given Zaffron a bright, smart casual

interior and a contemporary menu – much like what Thai Express did with that food but on a higher notch. Along with the theatre kitchen and jazzy music (Paris Cafe style when we were there last Thursday night), Zaffron exudes warm, welcoming vibes even if you don't know your aloo from your gobi.

The first thing to note is that Zaffron servings are meant for sharing – which makes it perfect for those who are in a sampling mood. The Chef's Sampler for Two (\$12) was really big enough for four ladies, featuring three different types of items. The papdi chat is a crisp fried dough "biscuit" topped with a savoury diced potato and chick pea mix, with the sweet-sour zing coming from sweet yogurt and mint chutney.

The starters tend to have appetite-whetting sweet-sour zing – such as the deep fried onion vadai drizzled with sweet yogurt

and then the interesting "mausli"-like Bhel Puri which is puffed rice, peanuts and fresh cucumber topped with sprinkles of murraki and mixed lightly with chutney.

The sambar idli (\$4.50) was practically a meal in itself – with the white rice flour cakes smothered in a vegetable curry-like sambar.

The sambar was fresh and savoury, although the two idlis were a bit on the dense side – thus making the whole dish a bit heavy. Just two starters alone were filling but the colourful Zaffron Tandoori platter (\$38) got us all perked up again – with the chilli red, creamy yellow and mint green meats on the platter.

There were the spicy Tandoori fish and chicken pieces, three each, then a mild butter-yogurt marinated chicken, two slices of minced lamb kebab stirred by flavoured with cardamom, and a mint chutney-marinated chicken.

All the meats were nicely marinated and baked or grilled, with their moistness retained.

The buttery garlic naan (\$3) was thin and crispy, while the luxurious Kashmiri naan (\$6.50) was the piece of resistance – if you like sweetened bread – with bits of wholesome nuts and cranberries.

The Khathi Meethi Gobi (\$8.50) is a twist on the regular aloo gobi, with the cauliflower cooked in a tomato-sauce so that it was like sweet and sour cauliflower.

The curried prawns in Kadhai Jhinga (\$15) saw fresh, crystal crunchy prawns simmered in a mild onion-based curry – which went well either with the Biryani rice or the naans.

The Dum Chicken Biryani rice (\$11) meanwhile is a stellar dish – and served in a generous portion too – with large chicken pieces layered into the spiced rice; the flavours steeped throughout the rice since it was sealed under a layer of naan dough.



Stellar dish: The Dum Chicken Biryani is served in a generous portion, with large chicken pieces layered into the spiced rice

Overall, we were impressed with the authenticity of the Northern Indian dishes, while the Southern Indian dishes have been localised to taste. The ending continued to impress – with the smooth and rich masala tea and a "fusion" dessert: The Moong Dal Halwa (\$9) is a crumbly "deconstructed" cardamom-scented halwa made from crushed lentils, butter, milk and sugar – paired with a scoop of Ben & Jerry's vanilla ice-cream.

With its smart casual setting, its authentic food and value-for-money prices, Zaffron can certainly hold its own against classic Northern Indian restaurants. The key thing is that they do the staples well, while also catering to Indian foodies with more adventurous palates and welcome the reinterpretation of dishes.

Rating: 6.5/10  
By Cheah Ui-Hoon

## WHAT OUR RATINGS MEAN

- 9-10: Sublime
- 8-9: Excellent
- 7-8: Good
- 6-7: Fair
- Below 6: Poor

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