# A Crazy World of Food and Fantasy

Posted on
Brilliant theatrical decor makes a super setting for a super meal

**Fantastical in concept, décor and food, Flamingo House is a new restaurant bringing a whole load of fun to Horton Place.**

**Words** Royston Ellis

To enter the restaurant, guests pass through a lobby dedicated to the creations of Gerard Mendis Chocolatier.The aroma of chocolate was tantalising but I resisted and was ushered onto what seemed to be a stage set. It was overwhelming and I asked to be shown upstairs instead. That didn’t seem right for dining so I accepted the steward’s advice and took a table in the depths of the extravagantly decorated downstairs room.

One of the maxims of restaurant reviewing is that if the critic waxes lyrical about the décor, the food isn’t up to much. No such problem at Flamingo House, where I feel supremely confident raving about both.

Talented Sri Lankan designer Stefan Andre Joachim has come up with an interior design concept that mashes together Renaissance shades and clashing

contemporary colours, velvet curtains, mirrors, glass shelving and modern chandeliers, all under the gaze of vaulted ceilings decorated with flamingos.

It’s a triumph of theatricality and the staff play their roles in this drama with real panache, always ready with a smile, letting no detail escape their notice, creating an atmosphere so warm and welcoming that we are instantly made to feel at home in this topsy-turvy world.

We read the fanciful story behind those flamingos off the place mats in front of us as we wait for the food to arrive. A Hollywood-worthy romance set in colonial-era Ceylon between a tea planter and the daughter of a local, it’s the perfect prologue for the Eurasian delights of the menu.

Selecting from an extensive range of snacks, sandwiches and more generous mains, we start with a dim sum assortment that includes pepper chicken, prawns and vegetable dumplings.

I opt for swordfish next – it’s not all that often you see it on menus in Sri Lanka and I’m intrigued by the idea of serving it with miso, an East Asian seasoning made with fermented soya beans. It’s richly flavoured and could be overpowering but for the accompanying pak choi tossed in sesame oil and tower of fluffy jasmine rice. The juicy fish arrives the old fashioned way – skin side down.

My guest has pork saltimbocca, a dish based on an Italian veal recipe. The pork is wrapped in bacon instead of prosciutto, served with mashed potatoes and blanketed in a savoury sauce. It works, its heavy flavour muted by the blandness of the mash.

There’s a lot more on the menu I’m keen to try – think cuttlefish stuffed with mutton – so a return visit is definitely in order. Dessert is also high on the list for next time: we’re so stuffed from our starter and mains that neither of us have space for Gerard Mendis’s chocolate fantasies.

Flamingo House is not a restaurant for fans of moderation – between the décor, the portion sizes and the inventiveness of the menu, the eatery is something of a sensory overload.

Above the restaurant is a bar lounge that seems designed for couples who want to canoodle over drinks in the plushness of an ornate setting. Those with a more

informal evening in mind can dine there too – as in the main restaurant space, there’s a good wine list as well as a fine selection of imported spirits.

The bill arrives promptly at the end and is surprisingly reasonable – not everything about the place is extravagant, apparently. The perfect end to a perfect evening out.

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