A Haven for Arabic Flavour

Posted on

Mixed Grill Fusion

Arabian Knights, an exotic restaurant in Colombo, entreats the diners to a colourful experience. Serving flavourful Mediterranean and Middle Eastern fare, it is a delicious gastronomic discovery for everyone.

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Photographs Vishwathan Tharmakulasingham and Geeth Viduranga

Naqqash Jaleel and Sarvat Baluch,
Proprietors of
AK with their children

A cosy and vibrant restaurant, wrapped in the swirl of aromatic herbal fragrances and rustic nostalgia, welcomes the diner to a truly Middle East-inspired ambience. Painted in shades of the sun, splashes of chestnut and copper, Morocco is depicted through AK's interior, with elegant lanterns and cushions handpicked by the owners from overseas travels. With humble beginnings as a roadside eatery along Marine Drive, Arabian Knights, also known as AK, has transformed into a gastronomic experience that offers a taste of the exotic.

True to Middle Eastern culinary customs as well as heritage spices and herbs, AK prepares the best of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean fare, fit for diners with a hearty appetite, the health conscious, as well as for those looking to feast at home. The authentic flavours tingle and play with subtle tastes rather than being bold and spicy. Though appealing to Sri Lankans who crave spicy food was initially a difficult task, through their dedication for quality and authenticity, Arabian Knights has captured the taste buds of the most pedantic diner. Attention to detail is crucial say the owners, husband and wife duo, Naqqash Jaleel and Sarvat Baluch. Therefore, spices and key ingredients are imported twice a month.

AK specialises in authentic Syrian grills and shawarmas in toasted *saj* bread. Tajine, a Moroccan dish slow cooked in a clay pot is also popular amongst restaurant patrons. *Ras el hanout* (a spice mix) creates a unique flavour in the tajines and makes it a truly one of a kind dish. The range of platters at AK vary from vegetarian

to non vegetarian, providing everyone a chance of relishing Middle Eastern fare. Platters are curated to be shared and consumed in typical Arabic style. Their desserts include Baklava, an edible, heavenly sweet flown in from the Middle East is loved by many, and stocks last only a few days.

Middle East-inspired interior with comfy seating

Their customers usually vary from tightly knit families to groups of friends, therefore, the restaurant is especially busy on the weekends. Arabian expats touring in Sri Lanka find AK to be a saving grace that plate up a taste of home. AK with seating for 70 diners, is equipped with a play area for children, hence a peaceful, comfortable and hearty meal is guaranteed. Naqqash Jaleel, who has moved from the travel and technology industry into hospitality, claims, that the feedback received from content customers has been incomparable. As many orders are placed for delivery and take away, AK is now looking into expanding to meet the demands of their loyal following. Arabian Knights, driven by a passion to offer the best and a novel concept, is further looking into retail, and is in the process of unveiling something that will “revolutionise the market.”

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