



Kolio Restaurant. Hotel Empress

Did you know that "Kim Chee" was one of the most favourite dishes at the Los Angeles Olympic Village? Well Kim Chee is one thing the Seoul Olympics will have in plenty. It will be the genuine preparation, with that slightly sour tang, which beats the celery stick any day. One of the recent happy discoveries in Colombo was that one does not have to go all the way to Seoul to taste good Kim Chee. It is right here, at Kolio Restaurant the new restaurant in the city which specialises in Korean cuisine, and is situated at the Hotel Empress. It is an inviting place, with an atmosphere quite cosy, and the fare on the menu an exploration in good taste.

Korean food has a taste of its own. It is certainly not Chinese, and definitely not Japanese. The better Korean chefs, like those at the Kolio, use spices sparingly. Garlic, red pepper, soya bean sauce and sesame oil are musts, but you will be surprised by what they can do in combination-the Korean or Kolio way. You could begin an evening by ordering a drink at the well-stocked bar, which is in a snug corner of the restaurant. It has premium and regular brands of scotch, good brandy and a respectable wine list too. Now who would go to a Korean restaurant and not order Kim Chee. It is made with fine Chinese Cabbage, or white radish or young lean cucumber preserved in garlic, red pepper, sesame and ginger-but prepared with varying flavours. If you have not spoiled your taste buds by heavy smoking it would be interesting to try and isolate the taste of one spice from the other. But remember,

the taste for Kim Chee is an acquired taste, like that for good cheese. However, I have a feeling this is going to be the “taste” of Colombo for a very long time.

If you care to go on the same explorative journey at dinner that I took, you are invited to order Kal Bee, which you will find is excellently marinated and barbecued spare ribs, or Bulgogee, which is sliced marinated beef. From the braised and grilled dishes one could recommend Dak Bokum,, which if you read the menu is diced chicken with vegetable braised in chilli paste. For your mix of sea food, a fine choice would be Modum Twigim, which is deep fried prawns and vegetables, made in Tempura style. Of course it is the fresh prawn of Sri Lanka, but the taste, aha, you find it a blend of the Rising Sun and Morning Calm. You would do well to order a portion of Khak Tu Gee-pickled radish-just to go along, and if you like a preparation of rice as the main dish, order Bibim bop, a really delightful preparation of steamed rice, with a mix of seasoned vegetables in meat sauce.

Kolio Restaurant has plenty of other specialities too. The best, by a long shot, is the Ginseng Chicken. If you have not heard of it, take it from me it is a secret Royal Recipe of Korea, which is now conquering palates all over. It is a preparation of whole spring chicken, served in a large bowl of soup. One bowl is quite enough for the average person, and for many who are above average, too. Sounds too simple? It is whole spring chicken, stuffed with genuine Korean Ginseng with all its goodness, dates, chestnuts, garlic and glutinous rice. When you have it you will know why royalty kept the secret of the recipe for so long. For those who prefer other tastes in food, or are in the mood for Chinese dishes, the Kolio has good fare to offer. If it is the crustaceans there is Black Pepper Prawn or Black Pepper Crab or Fried Crab with Chilli. If your choice is less spicy, then it is difficult to do better than choose the Steamed Crab with Milk Cream, tastes as good as it reads. When it comes to fish, you will remember Kolio’s preparation of Two Seasoned Fish, which is one whole fish prepared with a different flavour on each side. If you go for chicken, a la Chinese, I would recommend the Roast Chicken with Chinese Sauce. That is what the menu says, which means the menu does not tell it all. It is certainly one of the best preparations one could find, from the inviting golden brown colour, to the subtle lingering flavour of spices. Kolio has such regulars in Chinese fare as Fried Rice. too, but you will find the flavour is certainly better here. Japanese dishes are also available on order. The same goes for Western and Continental fare, if that is your taste and fancy.

Kolio Restaurant which seats seventy, has a quiet elegance which comes from wood paneling and light pastel shades in curtains. The checked table cloth shows a concern for laying a pleasant table, which is what the efficient waiters do, with a smile. It is open for lunch from 11.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and for dinner from 6.30 p.m. till Midnight, everyday. That, Im just say is a major plus in Colombo where most restaurants take the final order by

10.30 p.m. As much as it helps late diners, Kolio has an eye for the early riser, too. There is early breakfast from 6.30 a.m. You could have bacon and eggs the way you please, or morning steak, or the standard continental breakfast. But if you like the taste of Morning-Calm. why not Kukbop, a spicy beef soup with rice. It is not just a pleasant a wakening, it is a satisfying sustenance too. You can discover the gourmet delights. courtesy and efficiency of Kolio Restaurant at the Hotel Empress, 383 R.A. de Mawatha (better known as Duplication Road) Kollupitiya. Colombo 3 - just at the Alfred Place-Duplication Junction. Telephone is 574930, 574931. Parking is no problem.