

LORDS: A Curious Charm



Evening falls at the Batsman restaurant

Dusk. Waiters move discreetly between tables carrying lanterns. As daylight recedes, the flickering candlelight takes over. In the pond fish swim lazily. The sea breeze drifts in; after the heat of the scorching day, the evening coolness is soothing. The fragrance of cooking gradually pervades the air. Dishes appear with exotically arranged creations, patrons sip cocktails and chat, it's another evening at Lords.

Words Chiranthi Rajapakse Photographs Menaka Aravinda

Established in 2003, Lords restaurant in Negombo attracts those with a taste for the unusual. The founder of Lords, Martin Fullerton is very much an active presence at the restaurant. On any given evening he can be found mingling with customers, checking on details, and making sure that everyone is well looked after. Says Martin, "I feel as if I'm inviting people to come into my home." Martin was born and grew up in the United Kingdom and initially worked in the publishing industry. A holiday first brought him to Sri Lanka in 1990 and in his words he "fell in love with the island" and decided to come back one day and set up a business. This was achieved in early 2003, when Martin packed up his belongings and flew out with his two dogs to Sri Lanka.

Lords has an unusual charm enhanced by its distinctive interior design. The restaurant is situated by the Negombo main beach road, and patrons step straight

into the open air Batsman restaurant. Customers can enjoy a selection of dishes ranging from international to Sri Lankan cuisine while watching the sun set over Negombo.

The menu at Lords presents a range of exotic dishes from salad with pineapple, avocado, kidney beans, tomato and fresh mint served with lemon and mint mayonnaise: jumbo king prawns with spring onions, crack pepper, garlic served with a crab and apple risotto: lobster and ginger wonton with cucumber, coriander salad, served with garlic and orange mayonnaise. Pan fried prawns with avocado, celery and apple served with a coconut and cashew nut risotto and sweet crispy beetroot chips. Crab, cream cheese, celery and walnut pate.

Perhaps because of its outdoor setting the restaurant has a very relaxed vibe; it's an excellent setting to unwind after an active day at the beach. It has the trendiness of a street café with the wrought iron tables being placed near the road; this gives it an appealing air of informality.

Martin is a cricket fan, which is apparent from the names chosen for the restaurant. Next to the Batsman restaurant is the LBW Cocktail Bar where guests can relax in air-conditioned comfort. From the bar, a corridor leads to the Boundaries Courtyard where guests can sit in the armchairs and watch the ducks that live in the small courtyard garden.

Lords also caters to the aesthetic tastes of patrons as well. Next to the restaurant, a staircase leads up to the first floor where the visitor finds himself in an Art Gallery. The eye-catching artworks displayed are the creations of artist T V S Menaka who is also a photographer and interior designer; the distinctive décor of the Batsman restaurant owes much to his talents.

Martin's three passions as he defines them are his "love for animals, his passion for travel and the desire to do things very differently from everyone else." This is apparent to a visitor to Lords; displayed throughout the restaurant are pictures of the stray dogs and cats rescued by Martin. He is now the benefactor of nineteen rescued street dogs and three cats. As a result of his work to help animals, Martin developed the Hope Foundation, a charity which works to promote vaccination, neutering and rehoming of stray dogs and cats in Negombo.

Martin's desire to 'do things differently' also finds expression through Lords. The restaurant bears the distinctive stamp of its owner. From the unusual décor in the

Batsman restaurant to the ducks waddling peacefully in the courtyard, down to the eye-catching arrangement of food, this is a place which doesn't stay on the beaten track. For the traveller who is in the mood for relaxation in rather different surroundings and enjoys good food this is the ideal place to be.

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