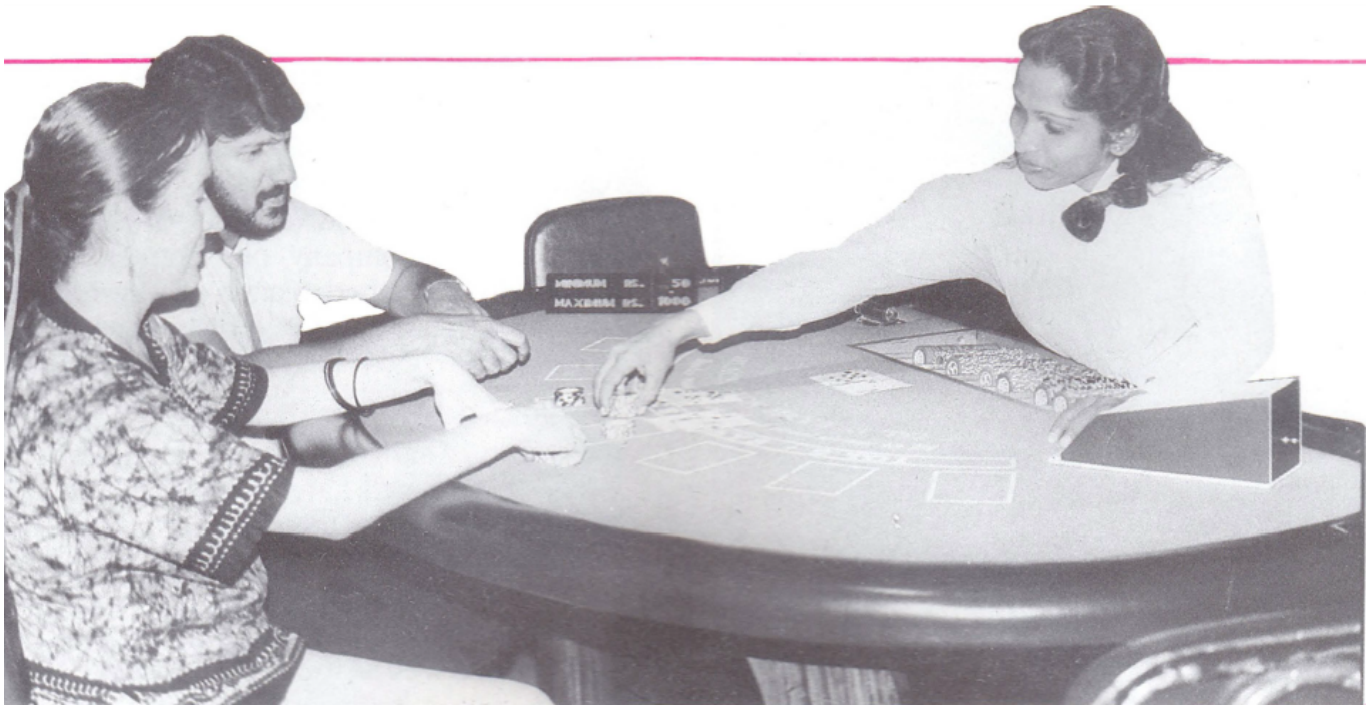
Rendezvous with Riches, Relaxation and a Royal Repast

Posted on

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A personal recommendation from a friend is always one of the most reliable ways for selecting a new restaurant to try out. So when an associate mentioned that he had recently come across a new place with good atmosphere, friendly service and, most important, fine fare at moderate prices, I quickly decided to find out about it for myself. With a few friends in tow, the next evening we paid a visit to the Royal Palace Restaurant, located on the grounds of the Mt. Royal Beach Hotel in Mt. l.avinia, just a 20-minute drive to the southern suburbs of Colombo. What awaited us at the Royal Palace certainly lived up to my friend’s recommendation. The attractive decor and the cordial manner in which we were escorted to our table all added up to a very favourable first impression of this newly refurbished restaurant which features cuisines originating from the shores of China, Thailand and even Korea. We were first presented with an extensive drinks list of local and imported

beverages from which we ordered our pre-prandial pick-me-ups. While sipping these, we pored over the multi-page Chinese menu containing a vast variety.

Going through the myriad appetizers, soups, entrees and desserts is no small feat since there is so much to choose from (more than 200 items!) almost all of which can be ordered in individual portions or in larger quantities to be shared amongst us. To tempt even the most jaded palate were exotic dishes of seafood, pork, beef, chicken and vegetables prepared in all manner of ways: stirfried, steamed, deep-fried and served with different sauces and condiments, along with various offerings of rice and noodles to accompany the entrees. However, there is also another menu-the dishes of which are available according to the availability of the specially imported ingredients-which represents the speciality of the house: traditional and creative Thai fare. In addition to the superb skills of an expert Thai chef, the restaurant’s secret to the authenticity of these dishes is what goes into them.

The menu promised us such delicacies as abalone, shark fins, eel, black mushrooms and more. There is also a chefs special set menu which changes daily. Additionally, all items on any of the menus can be ordered to take away at no extra charge. After consulting with our waiter, we placed our orders, and in practically no time we began a veritable feast fit for royalty. We started off with some especially appetizing appetizers, namely the Prawn Spring Rolls, each made from a whole prawn served with a sweet sauce, and the Papaya Salad, a delicious Thai speciality. From the soup selection, two that got top marks were the Tom Yam Koong, spicy and lemony with large prawns, and the Sweet Corn and Crab Soup. We then embarked on our main course dishes which we shared. Very tasty indeed were the Garlic Fried Prawns, the slightly salted Baked Prawns, and the Stuffed Crab.

Other fish dishes featured a slightly sweet Stewed Groupa and a lightly spicey Cuttlefish Thai Style. The chicken, beef and pork preparations were equally excellent: the Ginger Chicken had just the right amount of tang, the Lab Pork (a Laotian recipe) was a spicey, cold dish and the Thai Beef Salad was also a cold dish but with a lemony-spicey flavour. To accompany our entrees we ordered a beautifully garnished platter of Vegetable Fried Rice (one of 17 choices of rice dishes) and freshly made Egg Noodles Topped with Seafood. Unfortunately, with all this, we couldn’t squeeze in the various Thai curries made from chicken, pork or beef-so they will have to wait for our next visit, as will so many other tempting-sounding items on the menu. But we did have just enough room left for a lovely light dessert, the favourites at our table being the Bananas in Coconut Milk and various flavours of ice cream as well as the Fruit Salad.

A truly delightful conclusion to our meal was discovering that on the bill (which amounted to what you would pay in any comparable restaurant in Colombo) for all food consumed on the premises you receive a 25% refund in cash chips redeemable at the adjacent Casino Royale Club. And as the final touch we were each given a comments card on which to make any suggestions for improvement in the menu, service or whatever at the restaurant, and we were assured that the restaurant manager personally examines these each day, implementing guests' suggestions wherever practicable. Before we left the restaurant we were told that if we come on a Friday or Saturday evening there is a special buffet with a lot of variety that changes every day at the nominal cost of Rs 150/- per person.

And at this buffet as well you receive a 25% refund in cashable chips – a tempting reason to return to the Royal Palace Restaurant on a weekend. However, our night out was far from being over, and with our cash chips in hand we strolled over to the casino next door to try our luck. The casino has a cosy atmosphere that befits an exclusive club. The small floor space belies the large amount of action going on at the gaming tables consisting of one Baccarat table, three Blackjack tables and two Roulette wheels with three layouts, this last game being particularly popular among the casino's Western clientele. The Blackjack tables were also crowded, no doubt because of the favourable rules including surrender at any time, payment on five cards and doubling after splitting, as well as the bonus payment of 3 to 1 on combinations of three Ts or 6 8 of cards of the same suit. The addition or' slot machines-both in the casino and in the Royal Palace-is planned for the near future to offer even more opportunity for a variety of gaming excitement. You can't help but be impressed by the friendly ambience and personalized service at the Casino Royale.

The stewards are always nearby ·to attend to you and will immediately start you off with a welcome drink from the club's extremely wellstocked bar. Snacks are also served at the tables which are catered by the Royal Palace thereby ensuring a wide selection of quality refreshments-even ice cream if that's what you're in the mood for. After winning a little and losing a little (including all our chips from the restaurant), we visited the VIP section upstairs. The VIP area is smaller but an appreciably quieter etting in which to enjoy your gaming and the takes are a bit higher. And if enough players are present on any night, Poker, Rummy and Flush games are held there. The combination of fine dining at the Royal Palace Restaurant and an after-dinner visit to the Casino Royale Club offers you an unparalleled night out on the town. The restaurant serves daily from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. and the casino

is currently open from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. The casino also has two cars to provide you _with transport on request, and every guest who has flown into Sri Lanka receives Rs. 250 in free play coupons by presenting their utilized plane ticket at Reception. A further teaming up between the Casino Royale and the Mt. Royal Beach Hotel offers you an excellent way to spend a relaxing holiday in Mt. Lavinia, away from the hustle and bustle of metropolitan Colombo. Their joint packages give you the option of either two nights or five nights on a per person twin sharing basis (bed only) for just Rs. 499 and Rs. 799 respectively. Moreover, for a two-night stay each guest receives Rs. 500 in free play coupons at the casino and for a five-night stay Rs. 750, collectable in amounts of Rs 250 per day but playable whenever you wish. Included in this package you also get discounts at the hotel’s health club and coffee shop and on the entrance to the Peacock Night Club which has live music on Friday and Saturday nights. You can make your reservations by calling 714001-3 or 71580 . So if you’re bored with your usual haunts in Colombo and want to get away for a day, an evening, a weekend or longer, escape to Mt. Lavinia where you can dine in style at the Royal Palace Restaurant, play the night away at the Casino Royale Club and spend sunny days on the beach or at the poolside at the Mt. Royal Beach Hotel. It’s the place to be pampered in royal style.



Setting for a royal repast.