

Wishful Dining

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While the decor and furnishings lend a cosy comfort, the classic accents impart a sophistication to the restaurant

Stepping into Work In Progress (WIP) at the Dutch Hospital Shopping Precinct, I couldn't quite decide if this was the kind of restaurant for a quiet chat, a session of raucous laughter over a hearty meal, a quick stopover for a snack or a leisurely family outing. After a peek at the menu and a stroll around the restaurant, I found that this was because WIP readily lends itself to any one of these options.

Words Haseena Razak Photographs Indika De Silva

Although displaying the snug characteristics of an old-time tavern, WIP also exudes the feeling of a cafe or diner. With an interesting combination of sophistication – owing to the classic decor – and cosy comfort, WIP seems an amalgamation of different concepts creating a pleasingly eclectic whole. Amongst the understated furniture, interesting accents, such as elegant lanterns and ornamental pots, were thrown in for effect. Curious light features looking like floating orbs of light within black metal frames hung from the rafters.

As much as the ambience and decor set the scene, it's the food and drink that ultimately ensure that guests have a rollicking good time

Long wooden tables flanked by benches, the beer dispensers arranged in rows at the bar and the blackboards announcing the day's specials lend a laid back feel to the restaurant. Traditional European food to satisfy the most voracious appetite features on the menu. Succulent meats are delicately seasoned and complemented with salads, compotes and jus. The restaurant's signature dish, the barbecued spare ribs with spicy potato wedges, is marinated overnight in aromatic herbs, honey and barbecue sauce to give it that extra zing. Originating in Germany, bratwurst with mashed potato, sauerkraut and mustard includes grilled sausages spiced with marjoram, nutmeg and caraway. The chicken schnitzel is a traditional Austrian dish served with a side of potato salad and cranberry compote. Also on the menu is a dish iconic of British cuisine – fish and chips. Bremen Toast is a favourite at WIP. As much as the ambience and decor set the scene, it's the food and drink that ultimately ensure that guests have a rollicking good time.

True to its name, WIP is constantly enhancing its presentation and style to appeal to an expanding clientele. Recently, on the request of many guests, a seafood platter, jambalaya rice, nasi goreng and spicy grilled fish were added to the menu to entice the Asian palate.

In addition to the range of flavours and cuisines, the restaurant's bar has an extensive drinks menu that includes mocktails, iced teas, lattes and fruit blends suitable for a quick pick-me-up in the middle of a shopping spree. Located in a shopping precinct and surrounded by office buildings, the restaurant also offers pastries, sandwiches, desserts and a daily special to provide respite for shoppers and corporate workers alike. The alfresco area opens out into one of the courtyards of the Dutch Hospital and allows ample space for families with children to enjoy a leisurely meal under a sunny sky.

The manifold shades of the character of WIP attract a diverse clientele. As its name suggests, the restaurant is still a work in progress and therefore, hopes to change, improve and add features that will enhance its popularity. Perhaps it is this versatility and flexibility that has enabled the restaurant's patrons to create exactly the type of experience they choose to indulge themselves in at Work In Progress.

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