

A food court feast



If You're just looking for something quick, easy and filling when you're out and about in Abu Dhabi, why not head to the Zaika Indian Restaurant in Khalidiya Mall – you could certainly do a lot worse.

Sitting down in a booth opposite the main restaurant and kitchen, we're brought lovely freshly squeezed orange and pineapple juices as we take a look at the menu. We've purposely skipped breakfast this morning to make sure we've got plenty of room and our bellies are rumbling as we peruse the extensive selection of curries, kebabs and tandooris.

Ashok and Deepak, the restaurant's owners, had told us that Zaika do the best dum handi biryani and kebab platters in Abu Dhabi so really it's a no-brainer what we're going to try – one of each, obviously. We also decide to go for the tandoori chicken and Zaika paneer makhani as well as a selection of starters and naan – well, we did miss breakfast after all.

In no time at all, the table is groaning under the weight of all that food and without wasting any more time we tuck in.

Presentation might not be anything to write home about, but each dish offers its own kind of simple sophistication: from the traditional bread-topped biryani to the juicily succulent makhani, there's nothing remotely fancy. The focus is rather placed on the quality of the food. And it shows.

Also, the portions at Zaika are certainly not shy – the Zaika kebab platter on its own makes for a substantial meal. Lucky then that the staff are more than willing to pack up any leftovers in handy takeaway boxes.

If you still have room and think your waistline can take it, we heartily recommend the Gajar Ka Halwa, a delicious Indian carrot dessert. Sweet, rich and moist – it's like carrot cake's provocative older sister.

While the setting and food is never going to compare to such upmarket venues as say Ushna or Rangoli (and lets be fair, it's not trying to), this uncomplicated restaurant in the mall's food court delivers the expected – hearty authentic Indian fare, warm service and cheap prices. We'll definitely be back.

Jon Muller

What? Zaika Indian Restaurant

Where? Khalidiya Mall Food Court

Cost: AED 20-50 for two courses plus soft drink

We say: Cheap, authentic and tasty – what more could you want?

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