

Spice is right at Jai Ho

THE COMPETITION IS HOTTING UP ON SOUTH SHIELDS' FAMOUS CURRY MILE, NOW THAT JAI HO HAS ARRIVED – KAREN SOUTHERN WENT ALONG TO SAMPLE ITS DELIGHTS

CURRY CONNOISSEURS will be happy to hear there's a spicy new addition to Ocean Road.

Jai Ho (meaning May You Be Victorious in Hindi) offers an ambitious Indian menu, where old favourites such as Balti and Bhuna rub shoulders with unique contemporary dishes – a combination which brings an exciting new dimension to one of the nation's favourite cuisines.

Owners Khamal and Mo have invested a substantial amount of time and money in their dream restaurant... and it shows. The chic interior is a world away from the typically garish Indian restaurant of yesteryear: it's light, bright and modern with a striking white pebble finish in homage to its coastal setting.

But it takes more than nice surroundings to bring in the diners, and judging by the buzz around the place, it seems the message has already got around that Jai Ho is the new "hot" spot.



Outside may have been distinctly chilly, but the welcome inside was exceptionally warm and friendly.

We were promptly ushered to our table and soon demolished the freshly made pickles and popodoms, but, with so many tempting choices on the menu – including unusual delicacies like venison and trout – we had to turn to

Khamal for some helpful recommendations.

Our starters included a delicately spiced crabmeat called Kakra, wonderfully crunchy onion bhajis and crispy chicken tikka pakora.

Our party of four included two youngsters who aren't really familiar with authentic Indian food, but they genuinely loved the whole experience, particularly the exquisite vegetable garnishes carved into colourful flowers, which accompanied the food: as they say, it's the little touches that make all the difference.

The biggest oohs and aahs, however, were quite rightly reserved for the main courses: the adults opted for two of chef's signature dishes, the King Prawn Jai Ho and the Sabka Maza, while our young guests chose a Tandoori Cocktail comprising a feast of chicken and lamb tikka, sheek kebab, tandoori chicken and a generous side of salad and mint sauce, and for the traditionalist among us – rack of lamb with seasonal vegetables.

When we saw the size of the curry portions we were pleased we had ordered a vegetable pilau rice to share – the huge succulent prawns were mildly spiced, just as requested, while the tender chicken in the Sabka Maza was infused with a real kick, thanks to the expert blend of green chilli and hot spices, garlic, ginger, onions and tomatoes.

All in all, thoroughly enjoyable; or as the youngest son put it – totally brilliant.

Jai Ho is a quality night out at a very reasonable price.

Tel: (0191) 454 8702 or visit www.jaihosouthshields.co.uk



On the menu...

Starters: Kakra, £4.50; onion bhaji, £2.25; chicken tikka pakora, £2.95.

Mains: King Prawn Jai Ho, £10.95; Sabka Maza, £7.90; Tandoori cocktail, £7.90; rack of lamb, £11.95; vegetable pilau, £2.40; pickles tray, £2.

Verdict: Victorious on every level.