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The Spice Route

*The Imperial New Delhi, Janpath,
Near Connaught Place,
New Delhi 110001
Ph: 011 4111 6605*

*Meal for two: Approximately ₹8000
+ taxes, with alcohol*

Often referred to, over the last few decades, as the “best restaurant in New Delhi” by discerning tastemakers in the capital city, *The Spice Route's* first change of menu in over 30 years has a tall order to live up to. Thankfully, it passes muster and shines.

But first, a bit about its past.

While ITC's *Bukhara*, with all its Indianness, was a hit among the tourists, it's *The Spice Route* that caught the fancy of the fine dine elites. The menu comprised mainly of Thai dishes and it was often referred to as a 'Thai restaurant', but regular visitors knew it had South Indian curries as well... an unusual combo that seemed to work best as a hidden fact. Last but not the least, *The Imperial New Delhi*, with its lack of allegiance to global hotel chains and their loyalty awards, has carved a more exclusive niche for itself: it prices itself out of reach for the new luxury traveller, is the go-to hotel of choice for celebrities because of the anonymity it offers, and its location, in the heart of New Delhi, is matched by no other.

The new menu at *The Spice Route* is part of a systematic overhaul of *The Imperial New Delhi's* best-kept secrets. Headed by former *Leela Palace* GM, Louis Sailer, whose visiting card reads, 'While in India, one must visit the Taj Mahal and stay at *The Imperial*', the hotel has been quietly making changes to its most popular features, to keep in step with today and be ready for the future. *The Spice Route* is one of these reinventions. A few months ago, the restaurant quietly



introduced its new menu: this one was not Thai, nor was it South Indian. Instead, it covered cuisines from across the South Asian region, encouraging you to pair a Malay dish with a Kerala prawn curry, and follow a *Thai Mango Salad* and *Tom Yum soup* with a *Gindara Miso Cod*. (The cod is the menu showstopper for seafood lovers, and can give *Nobu's* version a stare down.)

So who is the chef who has made this change? Meet Indonesian, Chef Mustian Gadang, known for his home-style cooking and love for Asian fare. He is assisted by three others who specialise in different regions (South India included), and between the

four of them, they have invented options suitable for vegetarians, vegans and those with dietary preferences.

That is called moving along with the times, you'd say. We agree. But, what is truly a ready-for-the-future idea with this new menu at *The Spice Route* is that it makes an attempt to erase political borders where food is concerned, celebrate cultures for their individuality and commonalities, and set the tone for ideas of inclusion winning over boxed up values that divide.

Kudos, *The Imperial!* *The Spice Route's* new menu shows every indication of keeping the restaurant on top of its game!