

Food & Drink

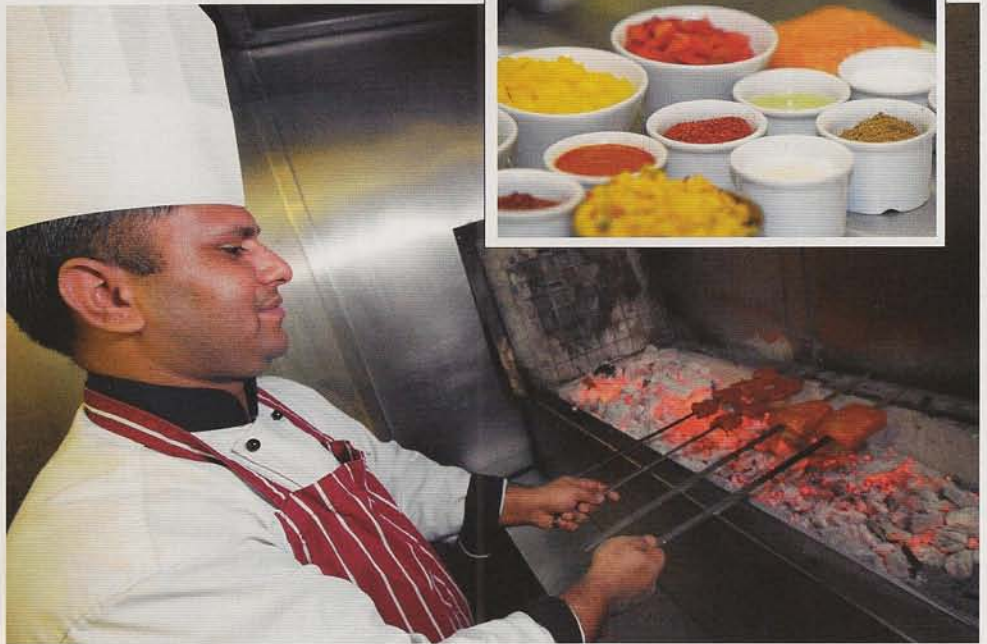
Nottingham's
MemSaab
Restaurant

Mary Trease
on Wine

Spreading
the Bramley
message



*Proprietor Naj Aziz at MemSaab –
picture: ANDREW HALLSWORTH*



MemSaab: The spice is right

Proprietor Naj Aziz has strengthened MemSaab's kitchen team with the appointment of Majid Ashraf as joint head chef. He will share with Nasir Mehmood the leadership of chefs delivering adventurous mainly North Indian and Pakistani cuisine to diners at the restaurant in Maid Marian Way, Nottingham.

"Nasir has been with us five years and has introduced a lot of things including our barbecue techniques," says Naj. "We went to Lahore, tried Majid's food, which was excellent, and thought he would also be perfect for MemSaab."

Majid brings to the team a wealth of experience drawn from appointments throughout south Asia and the Gulf. He has worked in hotels and restaurants in Dubai and the Maldives – surviving the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami – as well as Lahore and Islamabad.

Together Nasir and Majid showed off their skills for *Nottinghamshire Today* by producing two dishes involving marinated and barbecued prime ingredients.

First came a newcomer on the MemSaab menu – grilled salmon fillet with fenugreek leaves, garam masala and yogurt. Interestingly, the fish was served with a Mediterranean and Near East staple – couscous, coloured with little chunks of capsicum – and a crisp leaf salad enclosed in a poppadom ring. The couscous worked perfectly and helped soak up a sauce that was rich but not so strong that it might overwhelm the subtleties of the generously-cut salmon fillet.

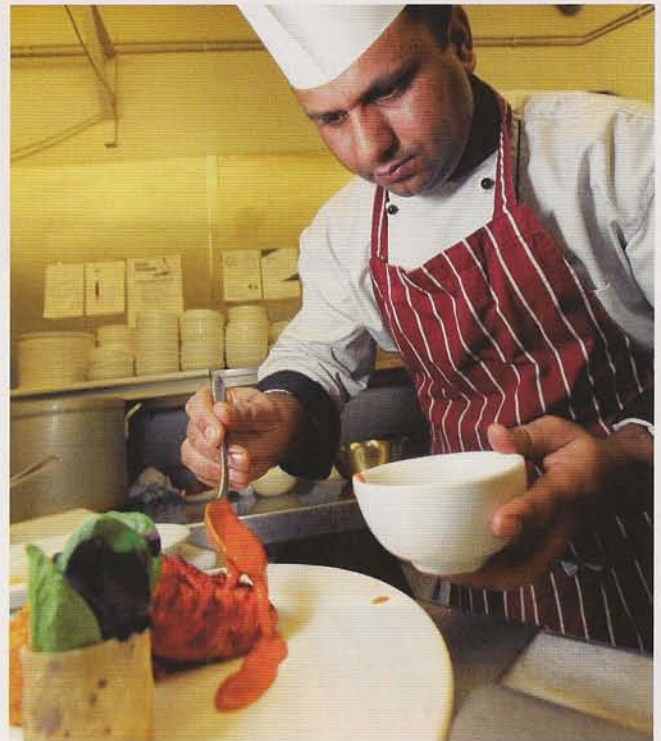
The second dish: ostrich fillets marinated in a mixture of tandoori paste, paprika, cooking oil and garam masala and cooked over charcoal. The ostrich – increasingly popular with diners who enjoy their meat but like it lean – was lightly spiced and very tender.

Naj Aziz has been running MemSaab since 2004. The main restaurant seats 120 and there is room for another 40 diners in two private areas. The place is a real looker, with its restrained mushroom and red decor and the dramatic carved archway through which diners can walk from the bar to their table.

It's not the sort of place where celebrity customers autograph photographs and have them pinned to the wall, and Naj is low-key about high-profile patronage. However Sir Cliff Richard likes the place and Sven Goran Eriksson has been a regular.

What you do find on the wall, however, is an array of portrait

Continued on Page 100



Clockwise from top left: The restaurant in Maid Marian Way ... Majid Ashraf barbecue-grills the ostrich (inset: spices at the ready) and plates up the salmon dish ... the completed meal: salmon and ostrich dishes with a pakora side order



Above: Naj Aziz and two of the Peter Thornborough paintings.
Right: MemSaab's joint head chefs Nasir Mehmood (left) and Majid Ashraf under the restaurant's carved arches

Continued from Page 97

◀ paintings by Peter Thornborough including some handsomely bearded Moslem, Sikh and Hindu grandees.

The menu is adjusted to suit customers' taste. New dishes get their own little table card for the benefit of regulars looking out for something to try for the first time. Right now the card features not only the grilled salmon dish but also char-grilled supreme of chicken with tomato fondue and raisin mint pilau ... and a liver and cauliflower salad infused with garlic and red chilli.

MemSaab won prizes at each of the last five rounds of the Nottingham Restaurant Awards and was one of the top five curry restaurants in *The Observer's* Great Food Guide 2006.

► MemSaab, 12 - 14 Maid Marian Way, Nottingham. Open seven days, from 5.30pm. Tel: 0115 957 0009. More information: www.mem-saab.co.uk

