



eating out

By Jaqi Clayton Church

Yum Yum

The infant Yum Yum, lovingly reared in its Church Street nursery, grew into an attractive, engaging child, and recently has blossomed into a sophisticated teenager brimming with confidence and style.

Even if you haven't yet visited Yum Yum's spacious new abode in the High Street, the chances are that you'll know someone who has, and the probability is that they will tell you they've never been anywhere quite like it. Two years in the making, this is now Europe's largest Thai restaurant, seating over 250 guests, with an absolute corker of a bar that's almost as intoxicating as the drinks that flow from it.

The restaurant is furnished on contemporary lines, and is organised into three distinct sections. There's even a choice of seating: at tables and chairs, or oriental-style at sunken tables, which means leaving your shoes behind and sitting on cushions at floor-level. This looked like great fun, and no-one needs to get creaky sitting cross-legged as there's a well beneath each table to accommodate your lower extremities.

One Saturday evening, we stepped out of the grime of the High Street into the calm oasis of Yum Yum's exotic courtyard with its fountain and Thai statuary, and mounted the sweeping steps to the lofty front door. Inside, having first observed the modern décor and buzzing atmosphere, we were shown to seats in the impressive bar area for apéritifs. Mine was a Bangkok Breakfast, one of several cocktails specially invented for Yum Yum. Comprising gin, clementine marmalade, orange and lemon, this was a glorious, zinging, citrusy taste sensation; and the Bloody Mary ordered by my vegetarian companion was adapted for him without demur by the substitution of anchovy-infused Worcester sauce for aged balsamic vinegar – a thoughtful touch that went down appreciatively.

The extensive menu, listing around 100 dishes, made mouth-watering reading and final decisions were tricky, but eventually we settled on starters of tempuras with plum dipping sauce. The vegetable tempura included deep-fried aubergine, cauliflower and red pepper, and the seafood variation featured prawns, squid and mussels. Both were quickly served and perfectly done with just the right amount of crispness on the outside and softness inside. Then came our main courses of *Ped Ma Kam* (crispy roast duck with tamarind), *Kang Mussaman To-Fu*, (Tofu, mushrooms and potato in peanut butter curry), accompanied by egg fried rice, Thai fried noodles with beansprouts and crushed peanuts and, to my mind, one of Yum Yum's most enduringly

delectable dishes, *Pad Pak Kom* (quick fried spinach with garlic and yellow beans). I confess I found the duck's tamarind sauce unexpectedly sweet and sought refuge in the juicy, salty spinach to bring my palate back into harmony, but the duck itself was a perfect combination of tender meat and near-crunchy skin. Our second main dish was a vegetarian take on Yum Yum's award-winning *Kang Mussaman* - lamb peanut butter curry - and if the deliciousness of this sauce is repeated in the carnivorous version, that's what I shall order next time along with another bottle of organic Valpolicella Falasco.

down to an after-dinner cigar with your Hine cigar cognac. We opted for our favourites of Grand Marnier and cognac with soda, but could easily have been seduced by one of the tempting dessert cocktails.

Because we had lingered long being rather greedy and boozy, our bill was an unsurprising £40 a head, but there's plenty of scope to be less – or more – extravagant.

I'm told the most popular dessert is hot chocolate fondant but, if not replete by this stage, I'd have chosen something sharper such as mango and passionfruit mousse. Instead, a couple of digestifs followed back at the bar. This brings me to the subject of the drinks list, which is nothing short of staggering. Whether it's a bottle of Roederer Cristal champagne or a dessert wine to rival Château d'Yquem, an 18-year-old malt, or an espresso Martini cocktail, you can obtain it at Yum Yum, as well as some fifty other wines, forty other spirits and various extra delights, right

When the time came to leave, we took away a few things we hadn't brought with us. Firstly, a sense of awe at the epic scale of the operation; secondly, no little admiration for the combination of skills that make it all function; and lastly, the curious impression that we hadn't merely been out for dinner. Somehow we had also been part of a large and merry crowd joining together for a great big celebration. Do go and see if you agree.

Yum Yum Thai Restaurant
183-187 Stoke Newington High Street, N16, 020 7254 6751
www.yumyum.co.uk
Open Mon-Fri noon-3pm and 6pm-11.30pm
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