



TIBITS

Wild colours. Cool seating. Trendy people. Doesn't sound much like a vegetarian restaurant, does it? Indeed many diners fail to notice the lack of fish, flesh or fowl at Tibits. In a barn-like space on Heddon Street – the West End's most intensely populated 'restaurant alley' – three Swiss brothers are offering a refreshing new concept which clearly appeals to all age groups.

Tibits is the name (derived from 'tidbits') of four highly successful such eateries in Switzerland. According to press releases, London was chosen for this latest opening since the city 'has a cosmopolitan eating out culture' and, judging by the constant influx of customers only a week later, the owners have not made a mistake in that regard.

Apart from the Designers Guild chair coverings and wallpapers in citrusy shades of pink, lime and chocolate, most prominent is a metallic, boat-shaped structure, which is both hot and cold buffet. You can take anything you like away, but if you eat in, the salads and hot dishes are weighed and charged at the same rate - £2.50 for 100g. What this means, in effect, is that if you are as greedy as I was, a large plate heaped with around fifteen different types of salad is likely to cost £8-ish; if less ambitious, like my specially selected



vegetarian friend, perhaps £7. Whatever, we found this excellent value.

The baseline is that everything is freshly made and carefully prepared. So leaf salads, beetroots, potato, carrot salad and so on are all as they should be. Beyond that, impressive combinations range from a wonderfully fiery apple and ginger salad; marinated fennel salad, dried (and rehydrated) French bean salad, aubergine and sprouted quinoa salads. These were all

quite inspiring.

Amongst the hot dishes – which change all the time – a creamy dish of 'Zurich strips' is made with tofu and mushrooms and the mushroom risotto is made with spelt and worked very well as a dish which had to be kept warm, unlike rice. Kachari is one of the Indian recipes which is used as a staple – it's a pastry case full of peas and vegetables – but vadai would be my favourite, a lentil fritter best eaten with the home made date chutney.

Drinks served at the bar will no doubt be quickly discovered by the glamorous youth imbibing cocktails on the street late at night, for Tibits is no hairshirt-and-sandal outfit. You can drink superb leaf teas if you want, but also cocktails made with fresh fruit juices (how wholesome!) and very reasonably priced wines (from £3.50/glass.)

Desserts on the buffet did not win our admiration. Fruit salad; tiramisu stuffed with oranges and a rogue dish of chocolate sauce seemed disconnected and ill thought out. Pastries at the bar, however, from Amaretti tartlets to traditional Swiss 'Schnecke' and big, gorgeous brownies all looked irresistible. Tibits is open all day from 8 am, after all.

You can bring children and let them loose in the kiddy corner on the lower ground with its books and drawing equipment. They can choose their own meal from the big boat and might discover they like salad after all. We plan to sneak round here for take-outs and eat-ins because, even for old cynics like us, it's a great discovery.

Sue Webster

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