ABSOLUTELY eats out...



The Willow

Beautiful and creative cooking is custom at Kingston's local health food haunt

By MIRIAM CAREY

ou might expect The Willow to be, if not clinical, at least casual - like the myriad of modern health food restaurants and cafés popping up in the capital at the moment. Even more so, because it is attached to Irrefutable Health, a holistic health clinic offering everything from chiropractic to nutritional therapy.

However, The Willow is quite the contrary - it's more of an all-day brasserie-cum-fine-dining restaurant, that wouldn't be out of place at a five star hotel and spa. On a Friday evening it is full of guests enjoying a leisurely evening and sharing bottles of wine.

The menu boasts all types of cuisines, blending British influences with Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and Persian flavours. It also offers gluten-free, dairy-free, grain-free, paleo, vegan, low FODMAP and low carb options – all of which are clearly labelled on their menu. Dishes include rabbit pâté with apple and cinnamon chutney, slow-cooked artichoke hearts with sundried tomato, wild rocket and parmesan, Turkish stew and lamb rogan josh.

The lamb rogan josh with taro crisps is to die for. The lamb melts in the mouth and the curry is rich



FOOD

Beautiful, creative and healthy dishes from all cuisines



DECOR

All day brasserie style restaurant attached to a health clinic



PRICE

Starters from £4.95, main dishes from £15 desserts from £5.50



VERDICT

Healthy food with no compromise on



and perfectly spiced. The scallops are also fantastic - tender in a rich gravy made of curried cauliflower, and topped with carrot crisps and sharp pomegranate. The shiitake and halloumi bites are also exactly how you would imagine - chewy, gooey in the middle, crisp on the outside and incredibly moreish dipped in homemade romesco sauce.

The baked sea bream is cooked to perfection and balanced on a bed of grilled and smoky Mediterranean vegetables. The vegan falafel burger is understandably The Willow's bestseller - the hearty chickpea patty, smothered in almond butter and stacked between two huge portobello mushroom buns, makes for an idyllic combination of textures.

I am completely amazed by the creativity of the menu at The Willow. Despite marketing itself as a health restaurant, there is absolutely no compromise on indulgence and everything I sample is filling, flavourful and immaculately presented. It just goes to show that enjoying delicious food needn't mean sacrificing your health. That, or The Willow are genius.

● THE WILLOW REAL FOOD RESTAURANT

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