

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE JEWISH

LE GASTROGNOME

VICTOR STRUGO



WHEN I first heard that Rosebank had a restaurant called Met Zu Yan, I thought to myself, "Ah so, another Chinese eatery." Then when visiting London, I dined with a friend in Golder's Green at a kosher restaurant called Met Su Yan. The penny (or rather the shekel) still didn't drop: it's a Chinese restaurant that, I thought, just happens to be kosher.

I looked it up on the internet and found also an eponymous chain of pan-Asian kosher nosheries in Noo Yawk, whose website explained that "metzuyan" means "excellence" in Hebrew. It seems, then that not only English words sound oriental when you separate the syllables but even Hebrew ones. Thus enlightened, I decided to check if our local Metzuyan lives up to its name.

The arcade that used to house the intimate French Bistro now contains this modern concept restaurant which spills out invitingly into the concourse. Panning from left to right, there's a cocktail bar; deli; sushi kitchen; an aquarium, through which you glimpse the kitchen, and a salon privé which is, oxymoronically, entirely glassed-in. Privacy for exhibitionists.

I generally find browns make for drab decor but Metzuyan's well-integrated shades (dark panels, tan



MAIN COURSE: Thyme-marinated salmon with brown sugar, and crunchy vegetables.

PICTURES: VICTOR STRUGO

METZUYAN

WHERE?

Baker Square West
Baker Street
Rosebank
Tel: 011 880 4153
www.metzuyan.co.za

WHEN?

Lunch: Sunday to Friday
Dinner: Saturday to Thursday

HOW MANY?

Approximately 200

HOW MUCH?

Starters and soups R37-R58
Mains R67-R168
Desserts R34-R49

GASTRONOMETER READINGS:

Food ★★★
Wine list ★★
Service ★★★
Ambience ★★★★★
Value ★★★

denim-stitch table tops) are sparked with splashes of greenery, red glass and all-observing *gefилte* goldfish in the aquariums.

But there's no escaping those darn flat-screen TVs, tuned to rugby. Few sights are more unappetising than sweaty, muddy, brawny hulks, but the Blue Bulls beating some Aussies at least had a positive effect on diner disposition.

Metzuyan evolved from its

immediate predecessor, On The Square. I suspect they retained some experienced staff, because our two-star (obviously newish) waitress was outnumbered by four-star colleagues, hence the average three-star rating. Management presence was discreet but observant, which is the right thing to do. So is providing diaphanous cloth napkins and not cheap paper. And a basket of complimentary fried potato skins in lieu of bread is a winning novelty.

Boozewise, I was surprised to see the long menu had only three kosher wine brands – local Backsberg and Klein Draken, Israeli Tishbi – making for perhaps a dozen choices in all. I'd have expected more. The trade-off: a lot of kosher cocktails and single-malt whiskies.

On The Square was essentially a steakhouse and the overseas Met Su Yans are oriental. With South African staff led by a Chinese chef ("funny, you don't look Jewish"), Rosebank's Met Zu Yan serves both – plus of course traditional fare, like the famous chicken soup which Madam chose to start. A wonderful broth, with lots of shredded meat and julienned vegetables. As noodle substitutes, there's a choice of kneidlach (large, subtly cinnamon-scented dumplings) or perogen (meat-filled, sort of Russian ravioli).

They offer several not-so-Japanese variations of "designer" sushi (roast beef & gherkin, fried chicken & avo, cooked salmon & sweet potato) that come as a choice of eight nori-wrapped Californian rolls or eight larger triangular fashion sandwiches, coated with sesame.

I chose the latter, in their Two Oceans incarnation, which alternated tasty and very fresh tuna and salmon. The pink gari was crisp and fresh but shy green wasabi for wimps deprived me of my sinus-clearing, pituitary-expanding fix.

Main courses identify Metzuyan as one of Joburg's more vegetarian-friendly restaurants. Between them, the curry, couscous, veggie tower, pasta and "veggie delight" platter showcase a kaleidoscope of about two dozen vegetables, plus a soya patty for good measure.

Madam opted for the curry – a blanket of coconut-creamy red lentils poured over a hillock of basmati rice, topped with grilled



WONDERFUL: The chicken soup, with lots of shredded meat and veg.



SOMETHING FISHY: Fashion sandwiches coated with sesame.



SIMPLE FARE: The lentil curry was uncomplicatedly yummy.

ANGELA DAY'S SATURDAY RECIPE

Gougère with prawn filling

Serves 4

A gougère is a savoury choux pastry dish mixed with cheese and served plain, or with a savoury filling.



PICTURE: STEVE LAWRENCE

Choux pastry:

90g butter
250ml water
250ml flour

3-4 eggs
60g Cheddar cheese, grated
salt and pepper

Filling:

1 medium onion, chopped
15g butter
15ml flour
250ml chicken or vegetable stock
10ml chopped fresh parsley
300g prawns, shelled
2 tomatoes, skinned, seeds removed and shredded
15ml finely grated Parmesan cheese

Combine butter and water in a saucepan and bring to the boil. When liquid is boiling fast, add flour and stir vigorously until you have a smooth ball of paste.

Remove from heat and set aside

to cool. Beat in eggs one at a time until the mixture is shiny and smooth. Stir in cheese and season. Set aside.

To make the filling, cook the onion in the butter until soft. Remove saucepan from the heat and stir in the flour. Cook for a few minutes over medium heat and pour in the stock. Bring to the boil. Remove from heat and add the prawns, parsley and tomatoes. Spread half the choux pastry around the sides and base of a well greased 15x20cm ovenproof dish. Pour in the filling. Spoon remaining pastry in a border around the edge of the dish.

Sprinkle with grated cheese and bake at 200°C for 30 to 40 minutes until puffed and golden brown. Serve warm with a green salad.

For more delicious Angela Day recipes, look in the Verve section of The Star on Mondays and Thursdays.

ANGELADAY
HELPLINE

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live up to their "sticky, gooey, creamy, chewy" promise.

Three fine courses out of five ain't bad. And you don't have to be Jewish to eat here, any more than you have to be a sitar player or ball-tampering spin bowler to enjoy the Oriental Plaza.

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