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For that no-idli morning

RAKESH MEHAR

De Lekkerbek is a cafe in the true sense, and even the heaviest items on the menu will only leave you sated and not stuffed

PHOTO: SAMPATH KUMAR G.P.



FOR ECLECTIC TASTES De Lekkerbek serves up food from across Europe in its lunch and dinner menus.

If you, like me, have wandered around Koramangala looking for a breakfast that isn't just idli, vada or dosa, you'll welcome news of the Belgian Cafe, De Lekkerbek. Here, finally is a non-Indian breakfast that doesn't cost the earth. "Of course, you can't do without idli, vada and sambar. That's our staple, but every once in a while you really want to eat something else," says Ranjeet Ranade, one of the partners running the restaurant.

It was precisely that desire that got Ranjeet and his friend and partner Riad into the project. The

restaurant opened nearly a year and a half ago under a different management on the Koramangala 80 Foot Road, but never got a chance to take off because the road got dug up for repairs almost immediately, although it did win over a few regulars such as Ranjeet and Riad. Unable to survive on just those regulars, the restaurant was about to close, when the two friends stepped in to revamp the place and try their hand at it.

And so you have the new and improved Belgian Cafe, one of whose highlights is the breakfast menu. For those with the stiff upper lip and so on and so forth, there's the English breakfast, with eggs as you like them, toast (brown or white bread), chicken sausages and coffee or tea. It does cost quite a bit more than a darshini breakfast, but is a wonderful option once or twice a week, particularly on a lazy weekend morning when there's little else to do so early in the day.

Or you could try the more unique Belgian breakfast, which offers waffles, the muffin/cake of the day and coffee or tea. Although the waffles and cakes aren't overly sweet, this breakfast needs a bit of a sweet tooth. If you can't take an entirely sweet breakfast, do try out the waffles at least, as they are a wonderfully light dessert and are served with maple syrup, which gives them a measured richness that is easily palatable.

Despite the name, De Lekkerbek serves up food from across the continent in its lunch and dinner menus. Among the soups, the minestrone is the clear highlight, so much so that the restaurant is considering serving nothing but that. It manages a rather subtle mix of spices, packing in that extra bit of flavour through the use of unusual vegetables like zucchini. Among the starters, the pommes frites or Belgian fries are worth a try. Unlike French fries, Belgian fries are fried twice, so that they have a crunchy exterior around a soft centre. Non-vegetarians could go for the fish and chips or the chicken nuggets.

Just right

De Lekkerbek is a cafe in the true sense, and even the heaviest items on the menu will leave you sated, but not stuffed. The pan-grilled fish and lemon can be had with herbed rice or garlic bread. However, it is better to go with the rice because the fish is so light that just garlic bread leaves you wanting. The dish offers soft, succulent slices of seer fish tinged with the wafting flavour of lemon strengthened by the smoky taste of fresh mushrooms. The herbed rice continues in the same sublime vein, offering little in terms of strong, overpowering tastes.

Indeed, nothing in Lekkerbek is really spicy. The chicken catalan, for instance, has a base of tomato cheese sauce that tempers the strong flavour of onion forming the bulk of the gravy. For vegetarians, the pesto rosso, pasta with a delicious, creamy basil pesto, works as does the more familiar pasta arrabiata.

For something lighter, try out the range of sandwiches. There's the croque madame, a grilled sandwich with egg and cheese and the croque monsieur with ham and cheese. But the personal favourite was the kip sla op toast, which serves up a thick, slurpy, mayo-filled chicken salad, between well-grilled slices of white or brown bread.

And finally, there's dessert, with the muffin/cake of the day, crepes and the aforementioned waffles. I try out the banana bread, which goes wonderfully with ice cream, and the crepe topped off with banana and chocolate sauce. The waffles, though, rule the day, with the right combination of brown sugar and maple syrup.

Belgian Cafe, De Lekkerbek can be contacted on 57686767 or at lekkerbek@rediffmail.com

Ambience: Cosy

Service: Satisfactory

Specialty: Waffles

Wallet factor: Rs. 350 to Rs. 400 for a meal for two

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