

# Restaurant which lived up to its billing

## **Babul's, 9 Market Place, Barnard Castle DL12 8NF (+44 1833 630575)**

It was minus 5C outside. The thought of pulling on heavy coats, jumping in a cold car and making even a short journey in sub-zero temperatures through twisty, country roads did not appeal.

However, the ratings on my tablet indicated an approval rank of 4.6. Quotes from satisfied customers included: "Great food, excellent service" and "a must for any curry fan". We went for it and I must say it was worth the effort.

I'd been several years previously when the restaurant was called Spice Island. The blurb now is: "Let us take you on a journey across different regions of the Indian sub-continent with a whole new dining experience."

Easy to park in the centre of Barnard Castle, thankfully, as the thermometer dropped. Others had braved the freezing weather as the restaurant was almost packed. The menu arrived on a tablet – not a preferred option for me – but we did what we had to and the food and drink arrived. A result.

There are plenty of options, eight starters, six signature, with 16 dishes in the curry corner plus a grill selection and dishes ranging from mild and creamy, herby and fragrant, medium and warming and hot and fiery. You can choose your protein and the choices include mushrooms, chicken, lamb chops and fish.

There are also vegan small plates which are said to be big on

flavour, there are 11 of them, plus seven biryani options.

Side dishes and eight rice alternatives are also available along with a chilli chart from very mild to fiery hot and egg, dairy, gluten, nuts, fish, crustaceans are among those catered and there are vegan choices.

A take away service is also available and that appeared busy, but my jalfrezi lamb, cooked in onions, chillies, tomatoes and herbs oozed quality. The medium consistency also suited. Great dish along with nan bread.

My companions also enthused about their dishes. We were well satisfied.

Down side, the upstairs toilets were freezing. You would not tarry long, and the plastic-type grass on the wall and roof did nothing for me. Those issues aside, this was an enjoyable experience. Hopefully, next time, the weather will be warmer.