



Manchester Living November 2005

Room with a view

Walking into Room, there is a real wow factor. The splendid first floor restaurant has a modern, funky cocktail bar, while the walls are decorated in a large print wallpaper that would only work with such high ceilings. Huge red light shades hang from the ceilings and the vast fireplace reminds you of days gone by when 81 King Street was a gentlemen's club.

The theory behind Room - which already has sister restaurants in Leeds and Glasgow - is to take a Seventies and Eighties classic dish and to turn it on its head by giving it a modern twist. So I was most intrigued when I set off for a meal there the week after it opened in Manchester with the boyfriend in tow.

Starting with a Bombay Sapphire and tonic in the bar, we took a seat by the window to soak in the atmosphere and chill out. I would definitely pop in after work if I ever felt like a drink in these sumptuous surroundings.

In the dining section, the tables are arranged in long rows with a central long sofa seat right down the middle of the restaurant. We opted for a bottle of Palena Sauvignon Blanc, from Central Valley, Chile (£17.99) while we studied the menu. The menu was indeed a list of all the classics - from prawn cocktail to Steak and kidney pudding, with a sub-title underneath such as Tempura tiger prawns, avocado tower and rib eye steak.

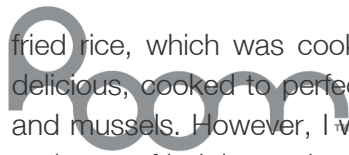
The waitress was very patient, while we asked her the contents of every dish on the menu and maybe it would have been better to have it all laid out. But then again, I guess some people like the element of surprise. All starters are £5, mains are £15 (except the fillet steak which is £20 and vegetarian options are £12) and all desserts are £5 - which makes for easy adding up if you are splitting the bill.

I went for the Prawn cocktail, which came on a huge plate and consisted of three very tasty deep fried tiger prawns in batter, with a stack of refreshing avocado slices and drizzle of pink sauce. Chris opted for the Coronation chicken, which was like a chicken terrine, and was a delicious twist on the original.

For the main course I ordered salmon en croute, which came with beetroot spring rolls, and a mixed salad (£3). Unfortunately the waitress had got confused and told me it came with risotto. I probably wouldn't have ordered it if I knew there was beetroot involved, but it came with a huge apology and the offer of a side order of risotto. The risotto mentioned turned out to be the Egg

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fried rice, which was cooked like a risotto and had a deep fried egg on top. The salmon was delicious, cooked to perfection and very moist, and the dish also came with hand-dived scallops and mussels. However, I wasn't keen on either the beetroot spring rolls, which were a little bland or the egg fried rice and wouldn't have put either of them with salmon.

Chris ordered the Gammon and pineapple, which was a juicy piece of pork with a spectacular crispy crackling all around it, and was placed on a large piece of potato, on to which all the lovely pork juices had dripped and a pineapple jus drizzled over. He ordered a side dish of carrots and coriander (£3) which were very tasty and not overcooked.

For dessert, I ordered the Lemon meringue pie - a long time favourite - which was absolutely amazing. It came as a small individual pie with a honeycomb parfait, where all the tartness and sweetness blended together as a pudding should. Chris went for the Raspberry ripple and praline parfait cheesecake, which again was fantastic.

Just to round off the meal, we decided to try a cocktail, as the menu looked so tempting. I went for the spectacular Volare, which comprised of Limoncello, shaken with raspberries topped with Pommery Champagne (£7). The Champagne was the perfect end of a meal and the raspberries gave it a kick. Chris opted for the Amber, which consisted of Zubrowka Bison Grass vodka, shaken with apple Schnapps, fresh ginger and apple juice and garnished with nutmeg (£6). This was also delicious and you could taste the ginger and nutmeg, without it being overpowering.

All in all, I enjoyed the evening and will probably go back sometime to work my way through the rest of the menu. The only thing I would change would be to put exactly what you get on the menu, so the poor waiting staff don't have to recite the entire menu to everyone.

Throughout the evening, the atmosphere was great, with a live DJ playing music in the corner, and I can imagine it really buzzing at the weekends.

Room also offers a private side room, The Rose Room, which can cater for up to forty seats. It also offers good deals on a business lunch - two courses within 45 minutes for £10, or three courses for £12.75.