

# Winter Dining



**With colder and darker nights here, what better way to warm the heart, soul and belly with a fiery hot curry ... Costa Life visits two Indian restaurants of distinction.**

Unlike the average high street in the UK, curry houses are still few and far between in Spain, but they are thankfully springing up, and the Spanish, not so familiar with Indian cuisine, are slowly warming to the taste. Curry long replaced fish and chips as our 'national dish' so being a nation of curry connoisseurs, we are perhaps harder customers to please.

## **Brujeria**

C/Poeta Garcia Lorca, 18 Pamis (Ondara)  
Tel 96 576 7353

**Y**ou'll feel rewarded just finding Brujeria. After a few terse words about taking the left turn back there, and feeling cursed that you'll never find it - you eventually do. A neon blue 'witch' glows out reassuringly. Brujeria is after all Spanish for witchcraft.

It's a little tricky to find, but when you step inside you'll feel like you're stumbling upon a well-kept secret. This place is really something special. In a world of ever growing restaurant chains, and pre-packaged, processed sameyness, this is unique. It cannot be recreated - it is the love and hard work of very proud owners Janet and Johan.

You pull into a pretty twinkley courtyard, and park up. You walk in and catch sight of the bar within an intimate dining area and quaint open-air courtyard. The tables, a mix of round and square Chinese red lacquer 'antiques'. Dotted throughout this area are small pumpkins and cherubs.

The overall look is fantastic - an eclectic mix of Eastern mysticism and rustic finca - difficult to explain, so ideally go see for yourself.

Through to the main dining area and the restaurant again, is styled differently. The walls are deep yellow, the ceiling beamed, and there is a fine open fireplace, with (of course) resident model witch. In the winter months, the fire is a huge attraction with every customer vying to be the nearest to it.

The restaurant was a ruin when Janet and Johan first discovered it. "There was virtually no roof, and the kitchen was once home to stables and horses. Parts of the building date back 400 years and you can see Moorish tiles in the courtyard. It took a lot of time to get it to the standard we were happy with" says Janet.

Janet has been in the restaurant trade for 22 years and picked up all she knows from her ex-mother in law 'who lived in India, and the kitchen'.

"She passed onto me all these authentic recipes. I have always had an interest in food and well, I'm very good at it!" said Janet.

The recipes at Brujeria are traditional and based on southern Indian Keralan dishes. Although a typically vegetarian cuisine, Johan and Janet have made slight exceptions to include delicious chicken, pork and lamb dishes.

Critics, who have never experienced the menu at Brujeria, may say the menu is limited. The menu never changes. You can't pick and choose and what you see is what you get. But, what you get, is a lot. You get 22 dishes served 'thali' style. We started with mussels in sauce - Tisrya Dum Masala. They managed to maintain their fresh sea taste, with an underlying warm spicy taste.

This was followed by homemade warm Paratha bread, Poppadoms and vegetable Samosas, and my only grumble, were a little on the heavy side - not as crisp and flakey as they should be.

Then a succession of never ending dishes followed ... Jhinga Bhuna (prawn curry), Saag (spinach with 8 spices), Moglar Murgh (chicken curry), Shikar Dopiazza (spicy pork curry), two different rices, and pots and pots of sauces and dips. Special mention has to be given to Kela Panchadi - (banana raita) and Foogath Kela - which is a fresh tasting mix of peppers, bananas and cashews.

Vegetarians are catered for - but Janet and Johan do ask for notice of this in advance.

The couple first made a name for themselves cooking international cuisine at Anabis in Denia, which they ran for 13 years. But they decided they wanted something a little different and 'away from the coast'. They decided they would specialise in Indian food. After finding the right venue - they found not everyone was as supportive about their idea of their 'perfect' venue and cuisine ideas.

"Everyone said we were crazy to do Indian food and to take on this ruin - even my family, my parents. But I just had a hunch" says Johan. His hunch was spot on.

The night we arrived, there were just a few diners, but it's the sort of place where the customers are regular, they're friendly, and well, just the sort of people you'd be happy to be eating nearby. It's intimate without being pretentious, and there's not many restaurants I know of where people at different tables talk to each other.

Brujeria has been in business for six years now and Janet and Johan claim it is a 'word of mouth' restaurant. It's location alone means it isn't really the kind of place you'd just chance across - and that's the way Janet, Johan, and the regulars like it.

The couple say their busiest night is aptly Halloween - October 31st - but it's also Johan's birthday - so do be nice to him or he might just turn you into one of the resident witches ...

**Price of meal £18.50 per person.**

**Please request a vegetarian meal at the time of booking.**

