

Yahool! India

in.yahoo.com/?p=US

Make Y! your homepage

YAHOO! INDIA

Search

Hot Picks: Dabangg 2 trailer Live Cricket scores Sunny Leone Mahi Racing Diwali

SIGN IN

New here? Create Email Account

MAIL

Check email

HOME

Sat, Nov 10, 2012

YAHOO!

Yahoo.com

YAHOO! SITES

Edit

Mail

Answers

Cricket

Dainik Jagran

Finance (BSE Sensex)

Flickr

Games*

Groups

Lifestyle

Local

Travel

Messenger

Mobile

Movies

News

omg!

Screen

Where to eat India's best biryani

Move over Hyderabad and Awadhi, the tag of India's best biryani goes to a variety in... guess where? **Find out >>**

Best of Y! Travel

Iconic travel images

Submit your photos

India's best biryani?

உள்ளே செய்திருக்கிறீர்

அருளுக சிறை அனுப்புகள்

Pics: World's hottest mom

13 - 16 of 56

TOP STORIES

FINANCE

CRICKET

ENTERTAINMENT

News in: English

Sonia Gandhi asks ministers to implement 2009 manifesto

Anna Hazare demands probe into black money allegations

Obama thanks PM, pledges to continue close cooperation

ion sharpens knives ahead of UP assembly session

Trending now - Bollywood

Aishwarya Rai

Sonakshi Sinha

Ileana D'Cruz

Salman Khan

Expand

REPLAY

HELIOS

THE WATCH STORE

By TITAN

KNOW MORE

Conditions Apply

Get to know India's musicians

HELIOS

THE WATCH STORE

By TITAN

15 DAY EXCHANGE PRIVILEGE

©TITAN

CITIZEN Eco-Drive

f c u k

SEIKO

DKNY

start

Yahool! India - Google...

Adobe Photoshop

11:01 AM

Bowled over by Biryani - Yah

in.lifestyle.yahoo.com/bowled-over-biryani-205910556.html

New User? Register | Sign In | Help

Make Yahoo! My Homepage

Search

Search Web

HOME

BEAUTY & FASHION

RELATIONSHIPS

HEALTH & FITNESS

TRAVEL

ASTROLOGY

VIDEOS

MY WORLD, MY HERITAGE

EDITOR'S PICKS

GALLERIES

TRAVELER

YOUR SUBMISSIONS

VISIT BRITAIN

TRENDING NOW

Narendra Modi

Anind Kejriwal

Azharruddin

UB-Diaseo deal

Vijay Malhiya

Thuppakk

Skyfall

Huma Qureshi

Aus Vs SA

Bigg Boss 6

DISCOVER YAHOO! WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Login

Learn more

Bowled over by Biryani

You've probably tasted it many times, but never quite like this. Take a journey to Dindigul, near Madurai, which has earned itself the moniker of Biryani City and dig into some sinful soul food.

By IndiaTodayTravelPlus | India Today Travel - Thu 1 Nov, 2012 2:29 AM IST

Email

Share

387

Like

1.1k

Tweet

25

Share

29

Yahoo Lifestyle Entertainment/ThinkStock - Luscious Lamb Biryani

YOU MAY ALSO LIKE

View Gallery

A juicy steak served up on the streets of Buenos Aires. Their grass-fed beef is famous ...

Article: 10 Indian dishes you must try

Article: Restaurants review - Stockholm, Mumbai, Gurgaon and New Delhi

"See? No oil!" This was followed seconds after a spoonful of biryani was dramatically dunked into a transparent glass full of water. I was startled and transfixed in equal parts. Startled because it was totally unexpected and transfixed because it is a surreal sight to watch grains of biryani making their way through water. As the grains and spices slowly sank to the bottom, the surface of the water was surprisingly clear and the expected film of grease failed to appear. A triumphant look, mixed with pride, swept across Prabhakar's face, the visual equivalent of 'I told you so'. As demos went, it was certainly fascinating. The test, Prabhakar painstakingly explained, proved that only quality ingredients were used and the biryani was slow-cooked to allow the grains to completely absorb everything--ghee, spices and flavours of the meat. I could only nod in stupefaction, partly in acquiescence and partly because I was so blissfully overdosing on the most glorious biryani.

But Prabhakar was not done yet. He carefully laid a large, fresh banana leaf on the table and then proceeded to drop some biryani on it. The grains plopped on the leaf with a dull sound, separate and all of them uniformly glistening brown in colour. "The grains stay separate only if it is slow-cooked and the method is correct," he explained. He should know. A third generation restaurateur belonging to Dindigul's Ponram Biryani Hotel brand, Prabhakar grew up learning to make it at his father and grandfather's knees at the restaurant started by the latter almost four decades ago. He continues to follow the recipe which belonged to his grandmother and is a zealously guarded secret.

So popular is the dish that Ponram has opened many branches in town and a couple of other places, but never too far away. "I need to be able to go and check from time to time; quality is everything," he said. In fact, Prabhakar's family is among a handful that has helped Dindigul, an otherwise nondescript town 60 km north of Madurai, attain the moniker of Biryani City, where people travel from nearby towns just for some taste of some sinful biryani.

Predictably, the recipes are age-old. The methods are old too; the biryani is cooked over firewood and red hot coals are heaped on top, such that there is heat from both sides. Each batch takes almost three hours, but sells out within minutes. And it was not difficult to see why. Unlike the biryanis of the North, South Indian biryanis tend to have a more robust flavour. So too with this. It was mild brown in colour and slightly spicy, but not so much as to be overwhelming. The rice (called jeera samba, a kind of aromatic small grain rice grown in Tamil Nadu) was packed with flavour and the meat, mutton in this case, was tender, falling off the bones and melting on the tongue. Both are cooked in a special kind of ghee that Prabhakar sources locally and monitors strictly for quality. And despite the ghee, there was none of the heaviness that one would expect. A fact that came home to me as I tucked in gleefully, enjoying the meal.

Meanwhile, Prabhakar tried to entice me to try some of the other non-vegetarian dishes popular at the restaurant such as mutton fry, chicken curry, keema (minced lamb) fry, which I did. On their own, they were good, but they didn't quite measure up to the biryani. For vegetarians, the eatery dishes up a Tamilian thali with rasam, sambhar, vegetables and curries, and which my companion assured me was quite tasty and fulfilling. I took his word for it; it seemed almost too criminal to dilute the taste of the biryani with anything else right now.

I was amused by this notion since I had happily gorged on vegetarian stuff less than five hours earlier in the day. Having arrived in Madurai the previous night, I had headed to Konar Kadai near the railway station. A nondescript eatery, it was buzzing with people, always a good sign. After a bit of waiting, I tucked into one of Madurai's specialties, kari dosa. It involved a spicy dry curry of minced lamb and fresh broken egg encased in a soft but firm dosa.

It was delicious, as was the egg dosa. From there, I headed to the bus stand, to one of the pushcarts, to try one other Madurai delicacy--kothu parota. Fussy eaters might balk at having to eat at the roadside stalls, but locals insist that's where you get the best variety. Besides, they were clean and everything was made fresh in front of you. At its simplest, kothu parota means a layered maida paratha which is minced on a griddle and sauteed along with onions, tomatoes and spices, and whatever other accompaniments you may want to choose such as egg, chicken or mutton. I chose chicken and the concoction was an explosion of flavours and textures that lingered long after I had reached my hotel for the night.

Early this morning, I decided on a quick visit to the sprawling Meenakshi temple complex in time for the Suprabhatham. Spread over 60,000 sq mts, comprising 12 gopurams, exquisite pillars, carvings, sculptures depicting various stories and incidents from the Puranas and epics, intriguing ceiling art, and a stunning edifice called the 1,000 Pillar Hall, it is a mesmerising place full of assorted sounds and myriad colours. Having worked up an appetite for breakfast, I headed to another of Madurai's institutions--Murugan Idli Shop on Westmain street. Started more than 40 years ago, the place is always crowded. I had to battle myself in and managed to find a seat, and then launched into the idlis. With the very first bite, I knew why fans swear by the restaurant. Delicate and soft, there was just a hint of the urad dal and methi seeds in the idli, and it completely dissolved on the tongue. I was spoilt for choice in terms of accompaniments: a plate of idlis came with four kinds of chutneys--coconut, coriander, mint and tomato-and sambhar. I wolfed down four idlis without realising it, such was its lightness. Enthused by the blissfully beatific look on my face, the waiter suggested I try one of the dosas or utthappams, but I regretfully declined. I was too full from the goodness of the idlis and didn't want to mess with its taste. Besides which, I wanted to be adequately prepared for the biryani at Dindigul.

Now that I had tasted the biryani, I was glad to have left it for last. The idlis had been superb, the kari dosa and kothu parota had no peers, but the biryani was almost nirvana-like. I am sure Freud will have a field day with this: I even occasionally dream about the biryani and I swear I wake up with its taste on my tongue.

What to eat
Biryani at Dindigul, Ponram Biryani Hotel, 32/33, Opp Canara Bank, Salai Road; tel: (0451) 244 1003

That's a lot of biryani!

On a typical day, Ponram Biryani Hotel dishes out 500-750 portions of biryani, with mutton biryani being the most popular. It uses 150 kg rice, 120 kg mutton, 15 kg ghee, 1 kg each of cardamom, cinnamon, ginger, garlic and kg cloves to produce its lip-smacking signature biryani.

We know you're thinking about Hyderabad biryani! Explore Numaish, a wonderful facet of Hyderabad culture.

THE BEST OF Y! INDIA TRAVEL >>

THE BEST TRAVEL PHOTOS >>

TRAVEL BLOGS >>

EXPEDIA'S LAST MINUTE HOTEL SALE

THAILAND 50% OFF

SINGAPORE 30% OFF

DUBAI 30% OFF

MALAYSIA 30% OFF

HONG KONG 20% OFF

ON HOTEL BOOKINGS

Expedia.co.in

BOOK NOW

HOTELS

FLIGHTS

DEALS

New Delhi

14/11/2012

15/11/2012

1 Room

2 Guest

Also search in (nearby)

compare all

clear all

MakeMyTrip

ClearTrip

Goibibo

Kayak

HotelPlanner

Booking.com

wego India

SEARCH HOTELS

WRITE GUEST BLOGS FOR Traveler

On the move

LATEST TRAVEL BLOGS >>

Seven days in Ladakh

Traveler

- Thu 13 Sep, 2012 10:45 AM IST

The lure of Ladakh is irresistible, especially to bikers who take up the challenge of riding its rough roads just before the monsoon wreaks havoc. PRAVEEN GUPTA shares ... [More >>](#)

A pious journey into the heart of I ...

Traveler

- Tue 28 Aug, 2012 3:37 PM IST

A journey to India's devotional heartland in Madhya Pradesh takes Purna Bhatia to the ancient, sacred cities of Mandu, Ujjain, Omkareshwar and Maheshwar. Continue reading ... [More >>](#)

[More >>](#)

TODAY ON YAHOO!

1 - 4 of 48

Indian cricketers and their supercars

Where to eat India's best biryani

Celebrity weight loss: Before and after

Sidhu: I cheated during my cricket career

[More](#)

LATEST TRAVEL STORIES >>

The best resorts in the Maldives

Our guide to the swankiest resorts in the archipelago [More >>](#)

CNT Traveller - 22 hours ago

Spirted traveller - Where to buy the ...

Which is the best place in the world to go and buy wine? Certainly not the airport duty-free shops, for only a handful of them have anything apart from the most commonplace labels. [More >>](#)

India Today Travel - Thu 1 Nov, 2012 2:10 AM IST

Celebrating Diwali Across India

Also known as the Festival of Lights, Diwali, or Deepavali is celebrated by Hindus across the world to mark the triumph of good over evil. [More >>](#)

Yahoo Lifestyle Entertainment - Fri 9 Nov, 2012 10:47 AM IST

Bowled over by Biryani

You've probably tasted it many times, but never quite like this. Take a journey to Dindigul, near Madurai, which has earned itself the moniker of Biryani City and dig into some sinful soul food. [More >>](#)

India Today Travel - Thu 1 Nov, 2012 2:29 AM IST

No plans for Diwali yet? Here's where ...

From Alibaug to Coonoor, the best places to holiday with your family [More >>](#)

CNT Traveller - Thu 8 Nov, 2012 2:16 PM IST

1 / 40

THE BEST OF Y! INDIA TRAVEL >>

THE BEST TRAVEL PHOTOS >>

TRAVEL BLOGS >>

Next