

**RESTAURANT**

Irresistible mojitos at Emerald Garden

Its strawberry basil drink is perhaps one of the best in town

BY JUDE MUOKI

When you walk into Emerald Garden Hotel you are welcomed by a calm and tranquil scene reminiscent of an ancient Chinese royal court area.

From the wooden floors and the open restaurant setting to the bridge that goes over a still pond that connects the restaurant to its bar, the ambience is one of peace and serenity. Our host, Prian Kolapara, gave us a brief introduction to what Chef Christopher Lewis had prepared for us.

Best mojitos

The starters included prawn spring rolls, stuffed chicken and vegetable gyoza (dumplings), sweet and spicy Bangkok chicken wings and a richly flavoured paya salad.

The highlight of the starters was the lamb barbecue for not only being delightfully tender but also exquisitely delicious especially thanks to the garlic sweet chilli soy sauce it was served with that had us begging the chef for its recipe.

All of these were paired with a strawberry basil mojito that has to be one of the best mojitos I have had the pleasure of sampling followed by a playfully spicy Nina's Chili Martini cocktail which warmed us up just right given how cold it was.

Next up the chef decided to serve us hot Tom Kha soup (Thai coconut soup) between our well earned break before delivering the main courses. To say we were already impressed and relatively full would be quite the understatement.

Before long the main courses arrived starting with beef wok fried Thai style with cashewnuts and oyster sauce, followed by spicy green curry chicken and yellow curry beef.

Local ingredients

Both curries were among the favourites of the afternoon with the subtle yellow curry emphasising the rich beef flavour and the spicy green curry with chilli, peppers and coconut complementing the diced chicken breast.

The mains were concluded with baby pak choi (Chinese cabbage) and pad thai chicken (Thai style fried rice noodles with chicken). As if the courses were not marvelous on their own, they were paired with a cool kiwi collins (Similar to a kiwi mojito) with fresh kiwi fruit in them.

During the course of the meal I had the of chatting with Chef Lewis who



Pineapple upside down cake at Emerald Garden.

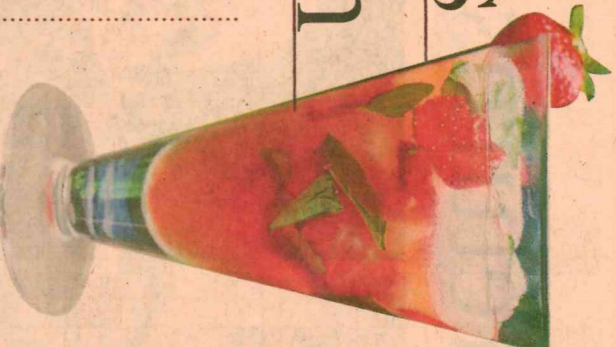
COURTESY EAT OUT

shared his plans to revolutionise the food and restaurant industry in Nairobi by combining local ingredients and flavours to create exquisite and refined dishes.

Our incredible afternoon culinary journey came to an end with a luscious, syrupy pineapple upside down cake and a delicious Thai mango black rice pudding paired with an espresso and kahlua martini.

At this point, I mentioned to our host that I would definitely be returning to the restaurant in the near future and he graciously informed me that on my next return I could take advantage of their express lunch offers that range from one course for Sh1,000 to two courses for Sh1,200 or three courses for Sh1,800.

Be sure to give them a try for yourself if you wish to treat a date, take the family out or simply dine like royalty as we did.

**STRAWBERRY BASIL MOJITO****Ingredients**

- 45 ml Captain Morgan spice rum
- 3 lime wedges
- 5 ml lime juice
- 10 ml of simple syrup
- Basil and mint

Method

- Muddle all ingredients and top with ginger ale

Emerald Garden cocktail recipes

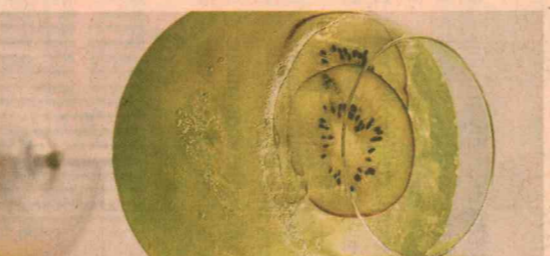
It is now safe to say that the cold season is just about over and the sweaters and jackets can be stored away until next season. You can put a hold on hot drinks and cocktails and enjoy the sun and drinks on ice that had taken a back seat this season. The good people at Emerald Garden were happy to share these recipes for you to try out.

KIWI COLLINS**Ingredients**

- 45 ml Bombay sapphire
- One fresh kiwi
- 10 ml lime juice
- Simple syrup

Method

- Muddle and shake all ingredients
- Strain in highball glass and top with tonic water

**Thai Mango Black Rice Pudding at Emerald Garden.**

COURTESY EAT OUT

**PUB REVIEW**

NewsCafe, where you escape stress the city breeds

BY JACKSON BIKO

Sometimes I like to sit at the balcony of NewsCafe Adlife and watch traffic on Nairobi's Ring Road below. That's when the office has become too much and the phone calls have become excessive and the e-mails keep ping-ponging in the phone and I have deadlines bearing down on me and I can't write a word because my head is saturated and I have made calls to clients who owe me money but they keep saying things like,

"Oh, we haven't paid you? Let me have a chat with accounts and get back to you." And I want to scream in the phone.

"That is what you told me last goddamn week!" but I chill because I'm Jesus's friend and he has the wheel. So instead I mutter, "Please let me know how soon you can pay" because next term starts in a month and there is school fees to be paid and toys to buy and the kids are driving me up the wall with demands like, "Papa, will you buy me a pink scooter" and you want to say, "I could use a scooter myself, to somewhere far where kids don't ask for scooters!"

**Worn out**

So when I've had enough of that madness and feel worn out and I dream of lying in a massage room, like in Serena Hotel, where the lights are dim and a lady kneads your back and seeks out the pain and there is a soft oriental music streaming from under the table and I slip into this sleep because I'm the only person in the whole world who sleeps through a massage until I feel a tap on my shoulder and the masseuse says, "Mr Biko, I'm done, did you enjoy it?" and I blink hard and mumble something. But there is no massage because you have to book first and I know I can't get a slot in the next hour. So I drive to Adlife and sit in the balcony at the corner. It's my safe haven.

This is at 3pm when all the fancy lunchers have eaten their salads and chicken wings and have drunk their sparkling waters and asked for the cheque instead of the bill. At this time, it's quiet and subdued and there are a few meetings in progress in one or two tables. I order a double whisky, a Singleton. I would order something I truly love, like perhaps a Glenmorangie Quinta Ruban but the evil accountants are yet to release my cheques so for now I cut my coat according to my cloth. I sit there at the corner and I drink my whisky and ignore all calls and e-mails and WhatsApps and hope and pray that no one I know walks in and I have to offer some dreadful small-talk and pretend I'm so happy to see them.

NewsCafe Adlife is my haven of peace at that hour and when it clocks 4:30pm I motion for the bill (or check) and I prepare to get out of there before the fancy people are back to order colourful cocktails and laugh in that dry and phoney middle-class laughter that completely irks me.