

« TRIED & TESTED FOOD REVIEW

ONE MORE FOR THE ASIAN INVASION

While there's a new Asian restaurant around every corner in the city, we're always happy to welcome another to the fold. **Rhea Dhanbhoo**ra visits to see what's cooking at South Mumbai's latest — **Jia**

Some spaces have all the luck and with Royal China's Neville Vazifdar helming this new Asian eatery, Jia seems to have won the lottery. The floor-to-ceiling windows that once welcomed you into a warm, woody LPQ have been replaced by grey and red signage and a sleek blue door encased in tinted grey glass — already a hint that things have changed in this corner of the iconic Dhanraj Mahal.

While Royal China focuses on Cantonese cuisine and Jia brings in Thai and Japanese specials, there is always the danger that one will overshadow the other. So far, both spaces have managed to be distinctly different, while retaining the same ethos. Its name means family in Mandarin and while it is a great spot to bring the entire clan, it's not a run-of-the-mill, family-friendly restaurant. Prime zip code aside, the wood flooring, platinum grey upholstery, subtly fragmented (designed to resemble a beehive) panel lighting and icicles dripping down from an arched ceiling lend the entire space a proud patrician air. Those who prefer warm, cosy spaces will not really feel at home in the slightly steely space, but if you're looking for a swanky dining experience, there's nothing quite like it.

Like most restau rants so obviously built to cater to the upper echelons of society, Jia too will leave your wallet a little lighter. However, the food does manage to stand out enough to warrant the exorbitant prices on the menu, making it more of a worthy indulgence than an extravagance.

SOMETHING FISHY

Unlike the universally applauded Royal China, we heard mixed reviews across the board for this one, so we thought we'd let them iron out any wrinkles before making our way towards what we hoped would be a meal minus any teething problems.

It's been touted as a space for dim sum, but don't miss out on other fare here, most of which is more impressive.

There are several places in the city that put together a mean plate of maki, delicious sashimi and mouthwatering nigiri, so there's really no need to visit Jia especially for the irs. However, one thing that does stand out from the raw plates is the Hamachi Carpaccio (₹875). The hamachi (you may know it as yellowtail) is a buttery (some would say slimy) fish and one of my favourites, especially when it's not overpowered by the sauce. Although I prefer a light lemon/ chilli oil drizzle, the ponzu did well here. While it's supposed to be close to paper thin, these slices could have been slightly meatier. That said, they don't really scrimp on the quantity.

It's no surprise that the Jia Special Roll (₹725) stands out. I prefer maki because I'm particularly fond of nori, and because uramaki is usually topped with something doused in too much batter. However this dish (although lacking good seaweed) is filled with a crispy, but not overdone, prawn tempura and accompanied by avocado slices of the perfect consistency. The house-made sauce was a little much and the wasabi a little weak,

Where Jia, Ground Floor, Dhanraj Mahal, Near Gateway Of India, Apollo Bunder, Colaba
Meal for two ₹2,500
Alcohol served Yes (pint of beer ₹375 onwards)
Contact 61562222



Visit Jia if you're looking for a swanky dining experience

but neither so noticeable as to ruin the dish. The water chestnuts were a nice touch in the Chilean Seabass Dumpling (₹795) and the Lobster Roll in Black Pepper Sauce (₹695) was tasty, but both were let down by somewhat glutinous wrappers.

NOT ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE

We had high hopes for the Crispy Soft Shell Crab (₹950), but it was a letdown. Usually one of my favourite parts of a meal, this was drenched in a very sweet Thai sauce that needed a lot more chilli balance. It was also very heavily fried.

The Spicy Tofu with Truffle Oil was distressingly close to going the same way, saved only by heady truffle oil and silken tofu once you got past the heavy coating, which tofu lovers will hate, but may do well a mong those looking to mask the flavour of the bean curd dish — though if that's your game plan, I suggest sticking to paneer.

SHELL OUT

The Crispy Duck Salad (₹775) wasn't something we were looking forward to the most, but it was the dish we remembered the longest when we were done. Where we expected thin slivers sprinkled into our greens, we got a pile of delicious duck that

WHAT WE'RE GOING BACK TO TRY

The problem with the menu at Jia is that it's too extensive. While we love having options, there is such a thing as too many. We're looking forward to visiting again for dishes we couldn't find space in our stomachs to try in a single sitting.

- **The Spicy Har Gow with Truffle**, so we can scoop up the delicious-looking caviar that accompanies it.
- **The Fried Turnip Cake**, to see if it matches up to the spectacular turnip cakes at one of our favourite upscale Japanese haunts in the suburbs.
- **The Pork Char Siu Bao**, because baos are all the rage, and we missed seeing where these fit in with the competition.
- **The Pumpkin, Corn and Crab Soup**, because we were too full for soup, but we've heard rave reviews of this stock and crab meat filled soup.
- **The Forest Honey Baked Chilean Sea Bass**, even though we ultimately went with



a delicious lobster, because this marinated bass with leeks at the side was one of the very tempting options we considered.

- **The Double Cooked Berkshire Pork Belly**, because we're suckers for a good Mantou, and who can resist a truffle glazed, melt-in-the-mouth belly?
- **The Salted Caramel Verrine & the Lemon Crème Brûlée**, because who doesn't go back for seconds when it comes to dessert?

had soaked up just the right amount of lemongrass sauce. If anything, we'd ask for more of the micro greens in this one!

We decided to stay away from predictable rice and noodle dishes and finished our meal with a Wild Mushroom Claypot (₹775) instead, which they also serve with scallops. Although dominated by the smooth shimeji and small trumpet mushrooms, we were excited about the wood ear and my favourite, shitake, also sprinkled generously into the pot, drizzled over with truffle oil.

After the crab, we decided we needed to skip the fish and rice mains to give another shellfish a chance to shine. Luckily for us, the Deep Sea Whole Lobster in XO Sauce (₹2,350) did a fantastic job. The only thing that could deter you from ordering this meaty delight may be the price.

Vegetarians will be happy with the extra attention thanks to a dedicated menu, but I'd

still recommend leaving Carpaccio (paper-thin zucchini may be delicious, but it's never going to be the true experience) and sushi to non-vegetarian sections. An avocado roll or two wouldn't hurt, but there are so many other, better dishes to pick from instead of filling up on sticky rice and seaweed that's best wrapped around fish.

Unfortunately at Jia, dessert is not as impressive as the food. We were stuffed, and looking forward to airy Tres Leches (₹375). While we got the light dessert we wanted and it was a good sponge, adequately soaked in milk and cream, it had a little too much cream.

South Mumbai is dotted with Asian restaurants as our favourites from other parts of town move into more upscale zip codes, but Jia still manages to stand out. We're comfier in the suburbs, but happy to trek over to Colaba for the occasional indulgence here.

« EVENTS TO ATTEND **NUCLEYA LIVE IN MUMBAI**
DANCE WITH NUCLEYA

Get ready to sway to the tunes of the maker of Bass Rani and Laung Gawacha and experience an unforgettable night of music and dance. Known for the international appeal his music has, with a touch of India at its heart, Udayan Sagar, popularly known as Nucleya, has been taking the world by storm. Ritviz will be opening for the show, which promises to be a real treat.

Tickets ₹499
When March 26
Where Dublin Square, Phoenix MarketCity, Kurla
Contact www.insider.in



« NAVROZE SPECIAL IN THE CITY
CELEBRATE IN STYLE AT HOTEL MARINE PLAZA
NAVROZE DELIGHTS

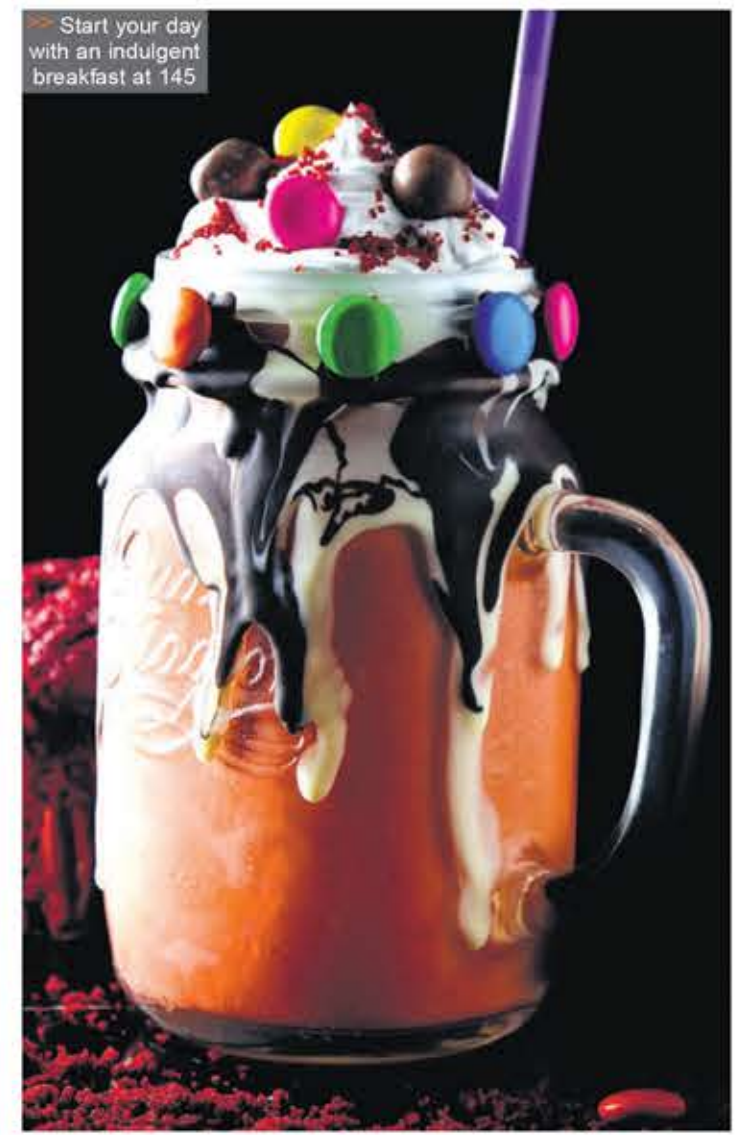
Bayview, the 24-hour restaurant, has a lunch and dinner buffet planned for your celebrations today. Head over for a luxurious feast that includes soups, starters, main course, exotic live counters, wine and beer! The menu includes Patrani Macchi, Kolmino Patio, Salli Boti, Dal Dhansak, Dhan Dal, Brown Rice and Lagan Nu Custard, so

reserve a table now for a delicious treat this Navroze.
Price ₹1,650 (plus taxes) per person
When March 21, from 12.30pm to 3pm and 7.30pm to 11pm
Where Hotel Marine Plaza, 29 Marine Drive, 29, 2nd Cross Road, Marine Lines
Contact 22851212

« CHECK IT OUT
BREAKFAST MENU AT 145 ALL DAY CAFÉ AND BAR
SCRUMPTIOUS START TO YOUR DAY

Recently launched all day café and bar in Bandra, 145 is all set to introduce its Early Breakfast Menu. The new additions to the menu, which has been curated by executive head chef Amol Patil and co-owner Ishaan Bahi, include a live egg counter to help you make sure that your eggs are prepared exactly the way you like. Pick from classic pancakes, waffles and French toast, and pair them with juices and smoothies. Try Killer Cereal bowls including the Blasting Berry Bowl,

The Porridge Detox, Breakfast Trays like the Protein Platter, Eggs Florentine or Eggs Benedict, Avocado on Toast, Burrito Rolls and Cream Crepes with Ham among others. The best part is that their signature smoothies, freak shakes and eat shakes are going to be part of the menu as well!
When Ongoing, from 9am onwards
Where 1st Floor, Joe Pali Building, HSBC Building, Pali Naka, Bandra (w)
Contact 62339595



Start your day with an indulgent breakfast at 145

DRINK UP

You're going to spend a long, long time looking through the food menu, so we suggest getting a headstart on the drinks. If you're not picking a wine or hard liquor, here's what the folks at Jia recommend you try, all for ₹595:

- **The Jia Special** A peach and lemon infused, vodka based drink
- **Red Rising**

- **Beetroot syrup** and a hint of maraschino liquor, muddled with tequila
- **Mango Sour** A gin-based apple drink with amaretto and mango
- **Green Apple Twist** For vodka lovers, with a hint of mint and lemon
- **Old Fashioned** A classic whiskey-based drink with brown sugar



The Crispy Duck Salad came topped with generous pieces of duck and drizzled with lemongrass sauce