

ine/restaurant



UXURY meets leisure at this boutique hotel. That thought resounds in my head as I lounge about in Ayana Fort Kochi's rooftop swimming pool space, sipping on a delightful virgin *piña colada*. I'm at this brand new 16-room property on Kalvathy Road—previously a Portuguese courthouse—to check out their in-house restaurant called the Ayana Cafe. While it's difficult to tear myself away from a panoramic view of the Vembanad Lake during the sunset, I head downstairs, as head chef Shivaprasad P S sends word that dinner is served.

By the bay

With monochrome Athangudi tiles on its floors and vibrant paintings by some of India's biggest contemporary artists like Seema Kohli and Sakti Burman adorning its walls, Ayana seamlessly blends art deco elements into a heritage building. "This 44-cover eatery was previously known as The Old Court. But, now we call it Ayana Cafe," begins general manager Abhilash Bhadrans, while I munch on a small plate of golden, batter-fried calamari rings infused with chipotle mayo and tartar sauce. He adds, "Reminiscent of an elegant colonial era eatery, we offer a selection of coastal fare specialising in locally sourced seafood alongside a choice of Mediterranean and western dishes." A cursory glance at their menu quells my doubts. They really do serve everything from *keerai parippu kozhambu* to *spaghetti aglio e olio*! I begin my meal with egg hoppers and an aromatic Alappuzha *chemmeen*



launchpad

INDULGE ●●
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS ●●
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017 | KOCHI ●●

HERITAGE HONED

Nestled within a 200-year-old Portuguese courthouse, this restaurant serves fresh seafood and Continental delicacies



Chef Shivaprasad

curry. The shrimp gravy simmered in raw mango extract is a perfect accompaniment to the crispy Sri Lankan-style rice flour pancake.

Fresh direction

Next, I try one of Ayana's signature tandoor bread pizzas. Perplexed? Don't be. Their thin crust charred tandoor bread, ladled with flavourful pulpy tomatoes punctuated with mozzarella cheese and basil provides a superb twist to the pizza *margherita* we are all familiar with. To showcase his culinary prowess, the 33-year-old chef also serves me an appetising delicacy from across the globe: an excellent sweet and spicy Moroccan grilled chicken—doused in a zesty orange glaze—served with herb rice and sautéed veggies. For dessert, I opt for a freshly baked apple pie from Ayana's patisserie. While I quickly polish off the crumbly cinnamon-sugar apple pie slices and bid the staff *adieu*, chef Shivaprasad promises to give me a call as soon as their rooftop Mediterranean restaurant opens.

Meal for two: ₹1,200 onwards.
Details: 9967045098

—Anoop Menon



Pics: Adin Matthew

