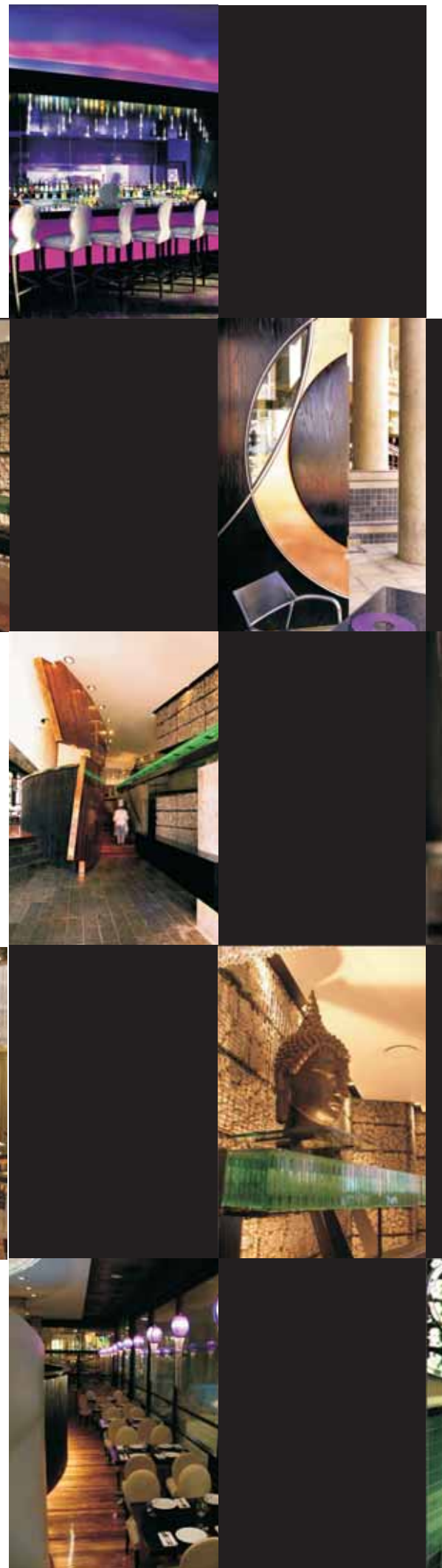






# Does the Orient Deliver?



**O**rient makes a notable impression when first entering the glass doors, as the reception area, straight and narrow, deters visitors from straying to other parts of the premises and acts as a one-way passage to the dining area.

After mentioning that a reservation had been made, one of the staff members took me to the table and immediately asked me what I would like to drink. My dining partner however, arrived five minutes later and was led to the table (by a different waitron) only to struggle in getting the attention of a staff member to simply order a glass of water. She then asked where our designated waitron was only to be informed that he was finishing off with a table downstairs. This seemed a little odd, as we were seated upstairs and most waitrons and runners in restaurants serve designated tables in a particular section of the establishment. Apparently, managing staff members like this gives everyone a chance to serve the table on a rotational basis per shift. The menu was self explanatory, but the desserts had been printed before the sushi menu, which made the search for them a little frustrating. However, we could have just received the only two menus that were in this exact format.






*Orient in Melrose Arch - 2006 winner of the prestigious Cube Award for its original and eclectic design - was investigated by Butler's undercover trade reviewer to establish whether the service and cuisine lived up to the establishment's reputation as an award-winning venue.*



The cocktail menu was extensive and had our mouths watering. After a recommendation from our waitron, we decided on the "O", which is apparently the signature drink of the restaurant. Needless to say it failed to disappoint as it was delicious.

While waiting for the food to arrive we each took turns to have a look around and found some areas that caused some concern. The glass adjacent to our table had not been cleaned properly and few dirty smudges had been left behind. The neon panels that fronted the bar downstairs seemed like they had also not been cleaned, as there were streaks and runs from what seemed to something liquid down the front. This completely ruined the focal point onto which the light was supposed to enhance.



My starter was a dim sum combo which was full of flavour and the ideal starter to a Friday lunch after a long week. Unfortunately, the cutlery used for my starter was not replaced before the main course came.

The main course arrived surprisingly quickly and even if it took longer to, it would've been worth the wait. Both dishes were presented well and boasted an array of delightful colours in the form of vegetables, garnish and curry. My partner's Yellow Curry with Duck was cooked to perfection and my Cashew Nut Chicken was a complete success and had my taste buds working overtime.



In terms of design, the downstairs lounge, with its subtle whiff of debauchery, is a plush space, fitted in blacks and purples, silks and crystals, temperature controlled for wine and cigar smoking, and is almost bordello-like in its approach to privacy and the unseen.

The downstairs area also leads into the unisex bathrooms, darkened through the use of metal screens covered in Chinese symbols, further adding to the sense of mystery. In total contrast, the upstairs area is a bright, white space that makes much use of natural light, white linens and light fabrics. Colours up here are mainly silver and crystal with hints of purple, and the sense of flow and integration is complete. Space up here is divided into a mezzanine level, a sushi bar (complete with an Asian sushi chef), and circular, curved dining spaces.

All in all, the food at the Orient was wonderful. The service levels however, had their ups and downs, as did the cleanliness of some of the cutlery and glasses. ❄️