

# Meraki, a new progressive diner in Neelangarai, Chennai serves up inspired flavours

Sonali Shenoy | Published: | 20th March 2020 06:00 AM



Guntur chilli fish parcel

Meraki sounds Japanese. But Ehjas M (30) tells us, it's actually the Greek word for creativity — substantial doses of which you will find on this menu. How often do you discover orange peel in your thuvayal or glass of cherry tomato water (extracted over a 12-hour cold cooking process) alongside your salad? Entering new territory with a 'progressive diner' — has meant pouring hours of thought and attention to detail in the kitchen. And to curate original creations with equal parts flavour and finesse — Ehjas and partner Sultan Sickenthar (40) have roped in Chef Vijaykumar Manikandan (better known as Chef Mani) of Chef's M&N consulting firm.

The latter has consulted on projects like Ministry of Drinks, LiBarrel and the KNK project. While Ehjas and Sultan are the duo behind Sushi in a Box and Café de Paris in Teynampet.



Grilled salmon with Dukkah crust

## Pineapples & typewriters

Meraki in contrast, is far from the hustle and bustle of the city and sits inconspicuously on a quiet lane in Neelangarai. A walk around reveals an eclectic range of décor elements that you would never expect to see together, neon signage beside bamboo light fixtures, a vintage typewriter alongside pastel pink pineapples. And tropical vibes painted all along the walls. The spacious set up (seats 60) is divided into three sections — outdoors, indoors and even a mini amphitheatre that Ehjas tells us, he plans to use for live music events and open mic nights.

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Interiors at Meraki



Buffalo mozzarella salad

## Born to brie wild

We, however, can't wait to dive into our open bowl of Wild Mushroom Cappuccino, topped with truffle foam. Chef Mani suggests we taste the foam first before our spoons dip below the surface. And true to his word, there is a subtle but distinct taste of mushroom to savour. We forge on to the French Onion soup which unfortunately is not as impressive, owing to some burnt onion bits in the mix, although the baked brie that sits beside it is delightful.

Our mains deliver hit after hit of stellar. There's a Black & White parotta paired with Gongura Kozhi Roast, a Four Cheese Ravioli tossed in Arabiatta sauce and a supremely indulgent Egyptian-influenced Dukkah Salmon, which arrives on a bed of creamed spinach made with white wine Citronet. If you're brave around heat, we recommend the hot-as-hell Guntur Chilli Fish parcel paired with orange peel thuvayal. A whole cucumber has been strategically placed beneath strips of carrot on one side, just in case you need to cool down in a hurry.

## On the brew

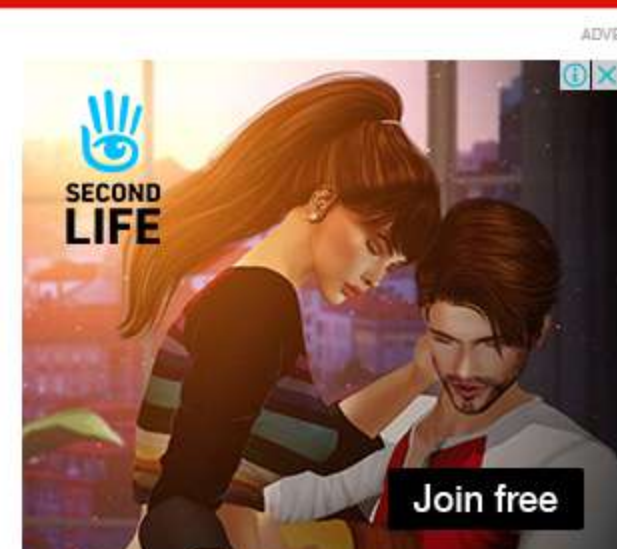
In the offing soon, is a coffee counter serving up single-estate coffees, sourced from Chikmagalur to Pattiveeranpatti in Tamil Nadu. Customers can look forward to small-batch roasted coffees in a variety of brews — from siphon to chemex to aero press.



Deconstructed tiramisu in a jewel box

A Deconstructed Tiramisu arrives in a jewel box for dessert. But we much prefer the beautiful flavour contrast Orange rasagulla submerged in a creamy chocolate-kahlua mousse, embedded with shards of honey comb for crunch.

At 4/18, 4th South Main Road, Kapaleeswarar Nagar, Neelangarai. Meal for two INR 1,200.



## Chennai



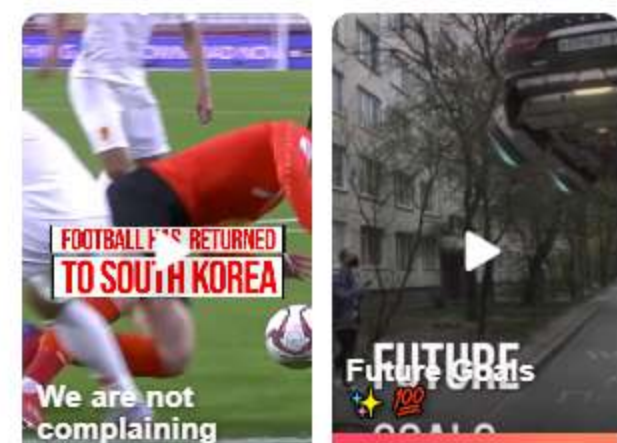
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