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Festival

Just Mex it up!

The ongoing Tex Mex food festival at the Jaypee group of hotels in the city promises many innovations

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It was with a sense of apprehension that we arrived at Jaypee Siddharth's Eggspectation to check out the ongoing Tex Mex food festival. Wonder what the event could offer for vegetarians from an array of culinary creations made by fusion of American and Mexican cuisine?

Prevalent in Texas and other south-western US locations Tex-Mex has been around for 30 years and came into being because of a huge presence of Mexicans in the U.S. who went on to contribute their flavours, ingredients and tastes to that country's melting pot – literally and figuratively. Being neighbours, Texas and Mexico share climate, eating habits, ingenious ingredients and taste profile, thus furthering the fusion.

The extensive menu arrives along with tortilla chips along with three dips, charred tomato, white bean and queso cheese, giving the same chips a different taste depending on the dip. The chips helped in going through the extensive card listing nearly 30 dishes with an array of more than 10 variations comprising appetizers, salads, tacos, mixed plates, main course, sides and dessert. Wondering where to begin with, Master Craft Enzo Renda, CEO of Eggspectation offers help. Thus begins the trip of savouring some delightful food with some interesting observations by him.

The flauta and loaded potato skins arrive on the table. The former is fried rolled tortillas topped with sour cream and guacamole really crisp which is perfect with corn, pepper, spinach potato and goat cheese filling. Half-cut baked potato pieces loaded with vegetables seemed tempting though the filling was tasty but somehow did not gel with the tuber. With so many tex-mex outlets what is so special about this fest? "Here we



MORSELS OF DELIGHT Fast food with all its embellishments and flavours are being presented at the festival

present tex-mex which is fashionable which means we are using trendy ingredients, sophisticated presentation and catering to refined taste profile. Basically showcasing what is perceived as fast food in a five-star environment with embellishments and flavours," he explains.

Knowing we are vegetarians Enzo asks us to



try chimichanga and enchiladas. The filling of the first grilled vegetable, refried beans, sautéed peppers and onions, Jack cheese and chipotle chilli sauce is refreshing and the finishing of salsa, sour cream and guacamole makes the tortilla a double delight. In enchiladas the filling is the same with grilled vegetable replaced by garlic mushrooms and the toppings

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include chiptole chilli sauce and Jack cheese baked and drizzled with sour cream.

These dishes have their non-vegetarian counterpart and presentation of both varieties helps in whetting the appetite. Enzo makes it a point to display this skill, saying, "Food for me has to be artistic and simple. It has to be both – well presented and flavourful."

Deciding to go slow, we nibble at the sweet potato, radish and papita salad. Try the first one with the mixed greens and the dressing of white wine cumin and feta cheese – leaving one with a lingering taste. Seeing droves of people enjoying the fest, we ask Enzo to let us on to his secret. "We do not Indianise or spike recipes. Instead we take the

authentic ones as they are ensuring that they stay fit and are at least as close as possible to the Indian taste profile and palate." Pointing to churros, the Mexican doughnuts served with chocolate fondue we are eating, he reveals, "This dessert is in such a great demand that we cannot keep up with its production." We are forced to take a small helping of the polenta pie layered with vegetable chilli and glazed with Jack cheese. Monitoring of the promotion items is also done with a view to include some of them in the regular fare

based on the feedback and response. Enzo forwards a compelling argument for the inclusion. "Our clients are savvy and like technology they expect food to change too. Food evolves consistently. It is a never ending process," he elucidates. The Spanish flan looks too tempting to give up so we have a spoonful. Well nothing like the churros which deserve to be finished.

(On till December 13 at Jaypee Vasant Continental, Jaypee Siddharth and Jaypee Greens Golf & Spa Resort)

