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### Last night I went to (a) Brilliant restaurant...

...and it certainly lived up to its name.



Every so often you come across a really exciting gem you know you are going to visit again and again. And Brilliant, an Indian restaurant in Southall, is the latest one of those that I've been introduced to.

I'll be honest with you, I'm not generally a big fan of Indian food. I love it while I am eating it, but the next morning I always feel so bloated and tired (after a night with indigestion) I always wish I hadn't.

But Brilliant is different. It's a Punjabi restaurant, rather than Bangladeshi as many British Indian restaurants are, and influenced by the background of the Anand family who own it, who hail from Kenya. (That means there are things like amazing, delicately spiced cassava chips on the menu, that I've never tried anywhere else before.)

It's now run by Gulu, whose father opened the first Brilliant restaurant in Nairobi in the Fifties, and his children, Dipna (above..yup, she's stunning) and Shanker.

Dipna runs hugely-popular cookery courses at the restaurant (many of her clients have tried one and consequently booked all the rest that she offers!) and her first cookbook, Beyond Brilliant, is out in the spring.

You may have heard of it because it appeared on the Channel 4 series Ramsay's Best - following which there were queues out the door for months. Even the Prince of Wales has visited.

One of Brilliant's unique selling points that particularly appealed to me is that the food is healthier than that in most Indian restaurants - ghee has been replaced with sunflower oil (and not too much of that, either), full-fat yoghurt is now low-fat yoghurt, and there are some fantastic vegetarian options using soya mince instead of meat. One of the highlights is the incredible array of tangy pickles, made fresh in the kitchen and for sale in the restaurant or [on their website](#) - try the carrot and chilli, the lime pickle or the tamarind chutney.

Last night I sampled virtually the whole menu, and got shown around the kitchen. The food is authentic, bright, tasty, perfectly-spiced and, frankly, brilliant. It's like being in the home of an Indian family where there's a hugely talented cook. Each dish tastes totally different from the last because every dish is cooked individually and there are no ready-made spice mixes used, even the garam masala is made from scratch. The dishes are sent to the table the minute they are cooked, giving everything a truly fresh flavour. Not only that, it's incredibly reasonable, with set menus for £20.

Dipna was kind enough to give me the recipe for one of my favourite dishes, tandoori salmon, to share with you here.

Seriously, if you are a fan of Indian food (and even if you think you are not), give it a go. You'll be made to feel like family and the food will leave you wishing you were going back the next evening - rather than wishing you hadn't eaten in, the next morning.

Dipna's tandoori salmon

The recipe below creates roasted salmon to perfection ensuring the salmon flavour itself



is not lost. The name Tandoori has been given because ideally the fish should be cooked in the clay oven, however at home it can be roasted just as well in an oven. This is Brilliant's most popular 'healthy option' starter.

serves 4-5

750g skinless salmon fillets cut into chunks of approximately 50g each  
1 heaped tablespoon ginger and garlic paste (or two cloves of garlic and a two-inch piece of ginger, peeled, finely grated and mixed together)

1 ½ limes freshly squeezed

1 teaspoon turmeric

1 teaspoon red chilli powder

1 teaspoon red chilli flakes

1 teaspoon garam masala

100g natural yoghurt

80ml olive oil

1 ¼ teaspoons salt or to taste

2 teaspoons chopped dill

¾ teaspoon carom seeds

10g gram flour

To garnish (optional):

½ lime (cut into wedges)

2 tablespoons chopped coriander

Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 180°C.

Roast gram flour in the oven on gas mark 180°C for 4 minutes.

Clean and wash fish, pat dry and cut into chunks.

Marinate the fish chunks with ginger/garlic paste, freshly squeezed limes and salt, leave to one side.

In a separate bowl, start by whisking together the oil and turmeric, followed by the red chilli powder, chilli flakes, garam masala, chopped dill, carom seeds, gram flour and yoghurt, whisk together until thoroughly combined.

Pour yoghurt marinade over the coated salmon chunks and toss the fish chunks in the marinade using your hand ensuring salmon is coated evenly with the marinade.

Leave fish to marinate in the refrigerator for a minimum one hour (or preferably overnight for best results).

Once the fish has marinated well, roast in the oven for 15 minutes at 180°C/350F/Gas 4.

Remove salmon from oven, place carefully into serving plates and garnish with fresh coriander and a lime wedge.

<http://www.brilliantrestaurant.com>