

Tea for company!

TABLE FOR TWO Bombay Jayashree and T.M. Krishna spice up snack time



SNACK SHOTS Carnatic vocalists Bombay Jayashree and T.M. Krishna try out Patio's High Tea buffet at The Metropolitan Hotel Nikko in New Delhi PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The old joke about the guy invited to his friend's house for 'bhajan' and mistaking it for 'bhojan', only to be left hungry as song followed song, with no sign of the meal being served, reminds us that the dividing line between music and food is actually quite blurred. We have heard of great musicians who were also great eaters. Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar loved his sweets. There were those who advised in detail about the kind of nutritional intake a singer should have. Take Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, who recommended ground almonds and honey to mellow the throat. Then there was Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, who with

his imposing physique, was mistaken for a wrestler!

Stories like this, of another time, another clime, are on everybody's mind when young Carnatic vocalists Bombay Jayashree and T.M. Krishna settle down in the ambience of Patio, the restaurant in the premises of The Metropolitan Hotel Nikko in New Delhi. After all, the two have just released their first book, "Voices Within" about the life and times of seven great Carnatic musicians.

It is teatime, and high tea is what Patio specialises in between 3.30 and 6.30 every day. Tea is always welcome, especially on a blustery winter day. The restaurant may

pride itself on its array of herbal and branded teas, besides cold beverages, but Jayashree is quick to ask for simple old masala tea and Krishna follows suit.

Favourites

The alimentary agreement ends there. Though both are strict vegetarians, their approach to food is decidedly different. Jayashree loves her rasam saadam (rice with rasam), beans poriyal (a dry vegetable dish) and other South Indian specialties, but Krishna jeers even as she lists them. "I am a major eating out person," says Krishna. "My wife and I are, but now with two kids, we don't go out

so much."

Anyway, retorts Jayashree, when touring abroad, the only choices for a vegetarian are bread, salad and fruit.

"You just don't like food," Krishna teases, suggesting she speak to restaurant staff and ask for suggestions. "I love cheese," he adds, "pungent cheese," and it is Jayashree's turn to grimace.

Patio has a lavish high tea buffet with confectionary, puddings, patties and puffs. The duo makes a trip to the colourful counter, studying the mango baked yoghurt, chocolate truffle, crème brulee, chicken patties, mini pizzas and vegetable curry puffs, and returns with a small selection.

Performer or not, everyone has to eat, but not every performer has to cook.

"I come from that background, of never having had to enter the kitchen," admits Jayashree. "My brothers can cook, but I can't cook for nuts."

Krishna points out that this luxury is more common among men. On the other hand, he finds cooking "a big de-stress." Krishna declares, "I can make soup."

Jayashree dryly queries, "The one you get in a box?"

In a jugalbandi, either can get the upper hand, and Krishna and Jayashree know it. But being in a soup can be fun!

ANJANA RAJAN