

# The rich, dark love of my life

The **BUFFET**

Between waterfall massages, Cheeky Chai detoxes and chocolate wraps, food critic and author Rashmi Uday Singh manages to sample the superlative spa cuisine that's becoming so popular in Singapore



**I**T'S official. You can have your chocolate and eat it too. Is this the pipedream of a spaced out gastronaut (read food writer)? A dream, yes! But one which has come true. In more ways than one...

As a dyed-in-the-drool chocoholic, savouring Michelin-starred Philippe Legendre's Chocolate Mid-bitter With Cocoa Sorbet at the fabulous sit-down dinner at the World Gourmet Summit in Singapore is exciting enough. But after that to have the rich, dark love of my life massaged into my body for two hours, as the warmed chocolate works its anti-aging miracle, is as good as it gets.

Singapore serves up multi-sensory delights. Wherever I go, my twin passions (restaurants and spas) are within kissing distance of each other. Singapore, synonymous with shopping, is now also becoming popular for its spa experience. You'll find them in surprising nooks and crannies. They sprawl in malls, lie languorously in hotels, huddle in office towers



and are accessible every time your achy breaky body needs them. And what a staggering buffet there is!

I begin my banquet by detoxing my clog with a double dose of – hold your breath – the Cheeky Chai Detox at Spa Esprit. Silken Dead Sea mud, fragrant cardamom, clove and cinnamon, are rhythmically and firmly massaged and then I am left to sweat it out in the wrap. This is right after a vigorous workout at the high-tech Club Oasis. Toned and invigorated, I enjoy the Grand Cru wines paired with the lobster and *foie gras* terrine, created by the Rubino brothers even more.

This pattern repeats itself. I drive 20 minutes to Sentosa's destination spa – Botanica – whose Galaxy Massage (rain-bath, herbal steam, *et al*) is legendary. It kickstarts my adrenalin, while the chocolate de-ager at Estheva puts me in a state of relaxed wakefulness. "You must try the 'celebrity peel'." Many of your Indian actresses come here to get it," Estheva Spa director, Tan Wee Teck points out. I visit the flag-



**"MANY INDIAN ACTRESSES COME TO ESTHEVA TO TRY THE 'CELEBRITY PEEL' "**

ship, high-end SK 11 (I can't afford its price tag but do appreciate the colonial bungalow), the 50,000 sq ft Raffles Amrita Spa, with its awesome range of therapies and wind up getting my back massaged by a waterfall at the Spa Botanica. Along the way, I target my toxins with large, chilled and flavoursome sips of Wu-Pao, Mint-chee and Crunchy Tiger – all specially formulated juices, part of the spa cuisine on offer. The chickpea parcels at the poolside restaurant Alligator Pear get my taste-buds activated, so do the fabulous dishes at Spa Botanica. It's the Power Salad and crunchy yet juicy Roasted Spicy Chicken at the organic restaurant Glow. In this quite tucked away yet madly busy restaurant, I enjoy the yoga magazines, juices, super desserts (including the low-fat dense, chocolate cake with silken yoghurt). A masterly marriage of health and taste. Which reminds me, on my next gourmet pilgrimage, I must check out Raffles Amrita Spa's Caviar Facial. I can't think of a better way to truly savour the spa experience! Can you?

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**WHERE THE ACTION'S AT**  
**Estheva Spa**, Orchard Road; Tel: 62756113  
**Spa Esprit**, Orchard Road, Village, Robinson Road; Tel: 68360500  
**The Apsara**, Goodwood Park Hotel; Tel: 67323933  
**Raffles Amrita Spa**, Raffles – The Plaza; Tel: 64316653  
**Andana Spa**, Orchard Road; Tel: 68369988  
**Club Oasis**, Grand Hyatt; Tel: 67381234  
**SK 11**, Scotts Road; Tel: 68369168  
**Alligator Pear**, Raffles – The Plaza; Tel: 67323933  
**Spa Botanica**, Sentosa Resort & Spa, Sentosa; Tel: 63711318  
**Glow**, Hilton; Tel: 67372233