

## Ray's Café & Pizzeria ( ★★★★★ )

Shine a light.



to signal quality and economy, and the identity of the man who started up the first store with the name is the subject of heated speculation.

Luckily, the identity of the person after whom Ray's Café and Pizzeria on Bandra's Hill Road is named isn't shrouded in mystery. The compact eatery, sheltered behind the opulent shelves of Nature's Basket, was christened after the son of one of the owners. The Hill Road Ray's has an impeccable pedigree. The owners started out by running Pizzeria Uno, the fabled seaside restaurant on Marine Drive, where many office-goers have succumbed to the temptation of calling in sick for the afternoon to spend hours drinking beer and watching the sun glinting on the Arabian Sea.

Ray's is tucked away into a little space between the wall of a housing complex and the Nature's Basket wine cellar. Diners can choose to eat inside the snug air-conditioned section or under white umbrellas in the little courtyard.

Like the New York eateries from which it takes its name, the Hill Road Ray's also offers pizza by the slice. At Rs 75 for a slice of plain cheese pizza, it isn't cheap. But it's delicious, they don't skimp on the quality of the cheese and the thin-crust is satisfyingly crispy. Ray's offers a range of pies, including plain cheese (Rs 175 for a nine-inch, Rs 250 for a 12-inch), and a ham and rocket pizza (Rs 325 for a nine-inch, Rs 450 for a 12-inch). We put our jerk chicken pizza to the ultimate New York test and are glad to report that it wasn't excessively rubbery when we pulled it out of the fridge and had a piece for breakfast the next morning. Ray's also serves a small range of salads, sandwiches and that other New York favourite, the hotdog. It comes in a fresh bun, with stewed onions, fries and relish (though no mustard).

The bun was fresh, the frank perky but at Rs 175, it's overpriced, considering that the chicken sausage roll at Andora around the corner costs Rs 40. For dessert, we had to choose between a gooey chocolate cake and an apple pie (Rs 120). After much contemplation, we picked the fruit. It was more crumble than pie and, just out of the oven, took us all the way back to the Big Apple. We'll be back when we feel like treating ourselves to an extravagant snack. *Paul Ebrahim*

**Ray's Café & Pizzeria** Gazebo House, 133 Hill Road, behind Nature's Basket (2645-1414). Daily noon-11pm. Meal for two approximately Rs 600. No liquor, no credit cards.