

# The Age

## Curry king guilty in bad-food case

By Selma Milovanovic

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Curry king Larry Mendonca was found guilty yesterday of keeping mouldy and bug-infested food at his Indian restaurant.

But a magistrate ruled that even though Mendonca inappropriately handled food at the Rajah Sahib Tavern & Tandoori Grill, he had not intended to sell it.

Magistrate Julian Fitz-Gerald dismissed 12 of the 20 charges against the veteran restaurateur, brought under the Food Act.

In the Melbourne Magistrates Court, Mr Fitz-Gerald said he was satisfied Melbourne City Council health officers had found chicken pieces, chicken stock, tomatoes and limes encrusted in mould in the Queen Street restaurant in March last year. They had also found a jar of Mendonca's prized chutney infested with vinegar fly larvae.

Mendonca, once host to touring cricket teams and showbiz stars, was also found guilty of failing to keep away pests and failing to keep **a coolroom clean**.

But Mr Fitz-Gerald ruled that just keeping the mouldy food on the premises of his now-closed restaurant did not amount to an intention to sell it to customers.

'There is no allegation here by the prosecution that the restaurant intended to actually sell any of this mouldy food,' the magistrate said.

Mendonca, 62, had pleaded not guilty. His mother, Deonisia, 83, and family company Candolim, who pleaded not guilty to 19 charges now face only seven.

Mr Fitz-Gerald said he was satisfied Mendonca had kept a mouldy plate of sliced chillies and mouldy salad dressing, which health inspectors had found in May and July.

He rejected Mendonca's claim that those items were for his own use. He said if they had been, Mendonca would have clearly labelled them as instructed by health officers on previous inspections.

Mendonca will be sentenced next week.