

Thai high in
*D*eira



OZONE AT THE LOTUS BOUTIQUE HOTEL OFFERS A DELECTABLE RANGE OF ORIENTAL DELIGHTS. AND EVEN THOUGH IT CATERS MAINLY TO THE SOUTH ASIAN COMMUNITY, THE STANDARDS ARE TRULY INTERNATIONAL

BY BRIAN SALTER

I NEVER cease to be surprised at how many hotels and restaurants cram themselves into the (relatively) tiny space that is Deira. The traffic is almost always a nightmare; but to say that the old district of Dubai has character would be an understatement.

The outside façades might well appear to be somewhat 'underwhelming', but often one is pleasantly surprised having walked through the main doors into the hotel lobbies.

One hotel that is a shining example of this seeming contradiction is the Lotus Boutique. We managed to drive past it not once, but twice — but once we had found it wondered how we could possibly have missed it. Plain it might well be on the outside, but inside it is a totally different ball game. And it is well worth making that magic step through its portals.

The hotel not only has three restaurants — a Sri Lankan one, one that serves healthy options, and a Chinese-Thai one — but a night club as well. And with a décor that my companion and I had to agree was 'PDG' (pretty darned good!) we settled in to the OZone (Oriental Zone) for what turned out to be a remarkably good meal.

With room for nearly 80 diners, the OZone caters unashamedly for visitors from South Asia — mainly families; and although the menu reflects food from the Orient, the majority of the staff are Indian, whilst over the loudspeaker system you are more than likely to hear ghazals from the likes of Jagjit Singh.

As we waited for our main order to arrive, our taste buds were woken up with a plate of kimchi, made with lettuce, green chilli and lemon grass; and this was quickly followed by prawns, cooked in ginger with spring onion.

The service from Bala — a waiter from Tamil Nadu — was faultless; highly attentive but not obtrusive in

the slightest. The menu was equally impressive — a delight simply to read through before trying to make that awful decision of what not to order. Bala quickly brought over the Shanghai Shrimp Dimsums which were set off by the most exquisite sweet coriander dip.

Next up was Phuket Fish — fillet of 'King Fish' (a local Dory) — served with chilli soya. It was cooked to perfection and beautifully set off with Burnt Chilli Prawns (you can tell that we love prawns!) cooked in the Szechwan style with wild pepper in a chilli lemon and soya sauce.

Of course, no self-respecting Thai kitchen would miss out on offering Green Curry Chicken; so being dedicated to the spirit of research we decided to order some of this too... and were anything but disappointed. Full marks so far.

To round it all off we couldn't resist the Fried Ice Cream — balls of mango and chocolate ice cream, wrapped in a fine breadcrumb and coconut mix, deep fried and then drizzled with honey. Sounds good? You can bet it was!

Typical price for two people is around Dh240. But it gets better! Go as a party of four or more people any evening and you can eat and drink as much as you like from a specially selected menu for an all-in price of Dh119 per person.

To get there, drive through the Shindagha Tunnel towards Deira, passing the Fish Souq on your left. Turn right into Omar bin Al Khatab Road and drive into the service road just before the right hand turn into Naif Road. Valet parking is available.

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What we liked: Excellent menu; excellent service; excellent décor
What we didn't like: Feeling stupid driving straight past the front door of the hotel
Cost of food for two: Dh250-300
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