



Hot & cool

EURO CUISINE
SET TO CHIC,
DRAMATIC
DECOR

DESPITE THE FACT THAT Dubai's Raffles Hotel has been in operation now for some five years, I have to admit that I had never ventured into the hallowed portals of its five-star restaurants, tucked away on the third floor overlooking Sheikh Rashid Road. Now that the Green Line Metro stops just 400m away from the hotel lobby, we thought it was about time to put that omission to rights.

We needn't have worried. Although

FIRE & ICE AT RAFFLES DUBAI BOASTS OF SIGNATURE STEAKS, BUT GOES WAY BEYOND THAT AMBIT — OFFERING CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN CUISINE AND A MENU THAT GETS TWEAKED EVERY SEASON

BY BRIAN SALTER

the menu goes through a thorough overhaul every three months to reflect the changing seasons around the world, it was quite clear that nothing is left to chance in this establishment.

Mind you, if the name conjures up in your mind a design reminiscent of London's Paradiso & Inferno restaurant, then think again. Fire there may well be in abundance thanks to the candles and flames surrounding the kitchen area; but ice? Apparently when it opened, one of the main effects of the fusion-style cuisine was the liberal use of dry ice and liquid nitrogen to help each dish create an unforgettable appearance on its journey to the customers' stomachs. No more, but the name has remained.

And though the restaurant has a well-deserved reputation for its steaks, with some

15 choices on offer ranging from Angus Prime all the way up to Wagyu 9 Tenderloin, it is so much more than just a steakhouse.

We decided to kick off with some simple sounding starters: prawns with a harissa dressing, Maine scallops with aubergine purée and a spiced parfait and calvados with caramelised fig and balsamic toast — all set off by some truly amazing recommendations from Sydney, the Sri Lankan sommelier, who we discovered could be relied on throughout the meal to suggest the most perfectly matched beverages to accompany everything we ate.

The seafood remained true to its original flavour without being smothered in overpowering sauces — something that too many restaurants tend to do these days; but I for one had to wonder if it wasn't so much the drinks setting off the food, as the other way around with the food perfectly complementing Sydney's choice from the Raffles' well-stocked cellar.

Next up, we decided to eschew the steaks on offer. My companion instead plumped for some delicious Brittany lemon sole (I just had to try a morsel or three!) while I opted for the Mulwarra lamb shank which simply fell off the bone the way you would expect from a restaurant of this calibre. Again, Sydney's sugges-



tions were spot on, while the accompanying truffled Peruvian potato and goat's cheese gnocchi would have been a delight even if served on their own.

For dessert, I went with a rhubarb and blackberry crumble, topped with crunchy oats and brown sugar — totally traditional... totally perfect; while my companion chose the Valrhona chocolate tart with ice cream and fresh berries. And yet again Sydney's suggestions came out trumps.

Fire & Ice could best be described as cosy with low lighting, high ceilings, exposed brickwork and dark wood in abundance. I could have done without some of the at-times-overpowering music from the speaker system; but the overall service was attentive and smoothly professional... there when you wanted them, but then quietly slipping back into

the shadows so as to leave you in peace to enjoy the food and conversation.

Given that Dubai is famed for its at-times bargain prices in some of its top-end restaurants, old timers may find the prices at Fire & Ice a little on the steep side; but visitors from some of Europe's capitals, where Michelin-starred restaurants invariably charge premium prices, will find the prices charged here not unreasonable.

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In seven words:
Electric atmosphere, great food and attentive service

What we liked: Sommelier Sydney's top picks from the Raffles cellar

What we didn't like:
The at-times intrusive piped music

Restaurant best for:
Romantic dinners or lunches with close friends

Did you know: All rooms at Raffles Dubai boast décor inspired by the Middle East

Cost for two: Dh700-800 (approx)

Contact: Fire & Ice, Raffles Dubai, Oud Metha, Dubai/ Tel: 04-3248888

RATING
★★★★★