

FINE DINING



Go fishing...

...at **M's Seafood Bistro** in Le Méridien — where you'll soon learn to savour life in a fishbowl

What we liked:

Excellent choice of menu; generous servings; interesting taste combinations

What we didn't

like: Staff was too slow with serving

Cost for two:

Dh500 approx.

Contact:

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Editor's Rating



I've always had a soft spot for the Le Méridien — it was the hotel I stayed in on my very first visit to the Emirates a decade ago. And anyone who is at all serious about their food is bound to have eaten at some point in time at one of the hotel's 18 eateries — yes, the Méridien really does have 18 restaurants, which, judging from my latest visit, continue to attract a regular following.

One of the outlets that was new to me was the hotel's Seafood Bistro, which for the past 10 months has nestled up cheek by jowl to the Beef Bistro (replacing the former Café Chic). Both are ably looked after by the Chef de Cuisine, Yvan Roger, a Frenchman from Lyon who has delighted his guests here since 2001.

Chef Yvan describes his latest creation as a contemporary seafood

restaurant boasting a unique blend of classic European flavours with an Asian influence thrown in for good measure. You can choose to sit at a high bar-style table where you can watch the meal being prepared in a modern show kitchen; or you might instead choose the restaurant's more traditional seating option. In the cooler months, though, most guests seem to prefer sitting outside al fresco — "an ideal place



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to people watch”, as the publicity blurb assures us.

My friend and I choose to people watch, as the red metro-line trains rush by under the red glare from the Emirates Flight Catering neon sign across the road; and we settle down to study the menu, which includes house specialities such as Salmon Tartar, Lobster Thermidor flambéed at your table, fish cooked in a salt crust and John Dory cooked with corn custard and spinach.

There’s a helpful message in bold type that you can borrow a pair of reading glasses, just in case you have forgotten yours!

It very soon becomes apparent that the biggest problem we face is what not to choose; so we ask Yvan Rocher for his advice. He tells us that the most popular dishes are the Lobster Thermidor and the marinated Black Cod Loin with Brandade (an emulsion of salt cod and olive oil – a speciality of the Roussillon, Languedoc and Provence regions of Occitanie.)

Yes, but if he were sitting where we were, what would *he* choose? He doesn’t need to consider even for one moment. He would start with a choice of Ceviche



– a seafood dish typically made from fresh raw fish marinated in lemon or lime; and then he would go for the Black Cod, which is flown in fresh to Dubai

three times a week.

We decide to follow his advice. I go for the ‘Thai’ Salmon Ceviche prepared with fish sauce, lime juice, garlic, pepper and lemon grass; while my friend plumps for a ‘Caribbean’ Prawns Ceviche cooked with fresh mint, coconut milk, ginger, garlic and lime. The mint gives it a life all of its own, my friend declares; and naturally neither of us can resist trying the other’s option. The verdict is a close tie between the two of them. Delicious.

It’s now time for the main course and this time I again follow professional advice and plump for the Black Cod, while my companion chooses the pan-seared hammour with cheddar cheese and Bianca sauce. Both are accompanied by a selection of four vegetables that set off the fish to perfection. Once again, it’s a close tie between the two, but I am pleased to have gone for the cod as my choice: an interesting dish that challenges the taste buds and keeps one coming back for yet another mouthful.

The portions are generous and we have to force ourselves to look at the desserts menu. But the effort is worth it as my friend decides to go for a chocolate sabayon with coffee ice cream and caramel sauce. My choice is a classic crêpe suzette – pancake with orange and flambéed at your table. Here, the waiting staff appear to have difficulty coping with the inner workings of the camping stove for the in-situ cooking; but once they have finally worked it out, the crêpe is as good as any I have had in France. **W**

SAY, WHICH CEVICHE?

Ceviche is typically made from fresh raw fish marinated in citrus juices, such as lemon or lime, and spiced with chilli peppers. It is usually accompanied by side dishes that complement its flavours, such as sweet potato, lettuce, corn, avocado or plantain