

It may be snobby, but to the team at Abu Dhabi Week a venue that promises all-day dining did not conjure up images of fine food and talented culinary work. No longer: that stereotype has been firmly refuted



You could be forgiven for not noticing Traders Hotel, a mid-market addition to the Shangri La Qaryat al Beri hotel brand parked next to the larger and more glamorous Fairmont. Inside however it's contemporary, chic and really rather funky – altogether more hip than the relatively traditional style of the Shangri La.

This follows through into Afyä, Traders' all-day diner. And it's not just the décor that sets the restaurant entirely apart from the usual standard hotel eatery: Gilles Perrin, the chef from Shangri La's Bord Eau – which features top-class French cooking at a top price – is now at Afyä.

Grilled halloumi cheese, an eye wateringly hot and spicy noodle soup (which thankfully can be altered to taste) and fried tofu with watercress make for delicious and original starters – even the normally unsavoury tofu tastes better than the usual wobbly, rubbery stuff that floats in miso soup.

Afyä apparently means healthy; the naan bread pizza with salmon and avocado fits the bill nicely. Slightly less healthy but equally tasty is the slim tenderloin beef finger with cashew nuts. Cooked for 24 hours at 64°C, the meat is tender and juicy.

Afyä restaurant

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Desserts include cheese cake, strawberry jelly and white chocolate and blueberries – complete with a hard shell and creamy centre. All are divine and unmissable.

It's clear that Chef Gilles' passion hasn't left the kitchen. The bill is much more palatable than the one you'd get from dinner at Bord Eau; the cooking is different but equally impressive. Eating out at Afyä is an all round surprising and completely pleasurable experience. And if Gilles still hasn't received a pay rise for his talent, we'll eat his chef's hat.

What? Afyä restaurant

Where? Traders Hotel, Between the Bridges (specifically, between the Fairmont and the Shangri La)

Cost: Average AED 268, for starter, mains and dessert, excluding drinks

Why? One of the capital's best chef's continues to serve up exceptional food

Why not? We're still struggling to find a reason. Unless you find a wealth of menu options a pain, we can't find fault

We say: Completely unexpected, unreservedly recommended

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