

So you're designing the food and beverage offerings for a new hotel. It's quite classy, so you get to specify a variety of restaurants. One of them has to be fish, right? After all, how difficult can it be to cook fish? In a city parked right next to a sea?

Well, it depends how much cooking you want. Your basic grilled tuna is largely a matter of quality ingredients and knowing how hot the grill gets. At Nautilus (described modestly as a "seafood brasserie" but parked on the outer edge of the Yas Hotel, with style and prices to match) you can indeed have the simple things done well. But if you want a little more adventure in your cooking, there isn't currently much alternative in Abu Dhabi – and Nautilus is a place where genuinely interesting combinations are put on your plate alongside (or under, or on top of) some perfectly cooked finny friends.

Take the braised halibut. It's a firm chunk of fillet, apparently cooked sous vide, served with delectable wild mushrooms (under) and baby onions (alongside) plus a foamy zucchini sauce (over). The brilliant extra is oxtail boulangère, a layered bake of potatoes and oxtail that counterpoints the taste and the texture of the fish to perfection.

Or the John Dory, served with "leek truffle cream" and baby jacket potatoes – and a stunningly flavoursome red wine reduction. Yep, red wine gravy; not much of it, but bursting with taste. It works, believe me.

There are a few more of these clever main courses on the menu, but not an intimidating number. There are also many simple-but-good options: wok-fried, steamed, and grilled, a short list of fish and crustacea. The very hungry can have a seafood platter to share, and they are huge. Starters are neat and thoughtful – the Salmon Special features the eponymous fish three ways, and so do the King Crab Leg and the Tuna Tasting plate. The desserts are thankfully smallish but still perfectly formed, the best sorbet I've had for a long while and a lemongrass crème brulée with rhubarb grenadine and macadamia brittle that defines exactly how a crème brulée should be.

There are some very good fish places in Abu Dhabi. Now's there a really great one only just off the island.

Nautilus

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What? Nautilus

Where? The Yas Hotel

Cost: Around AED 250-400 per person, plus tax and charges

Why? Cooking this good is worth the trip

Why not? It's on Yas, but go anyway

We say: The new top fish place in (well, near) town

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