

Apart from the absence of cactuses and dawn shoot-outs, the slightly barren land known as Yas Island is an appropriate home for a quite authentic Mexican eatery with a little extra creative flair.

And it belongs to the Park inn. While the hotel may not outshine its neighbouring venues from the outside, inside the hotel's main bar and restaurant, Amerigos does indeed shine.

A social, laid-back atmosphere, the giant TV screen with sports coverage, and cool dangling lights set a relaxed and fun tone. The menu is fun, too. It's pleasing to discover the restaurant manager, Fernando, is Mexican – and the influence clearly follows through to the kitchen.

A traditional dish is the perfect appetiser: ceviche de atun, lime-marinated tuna with fresh pico del gallo salsa, thinly grated avocado and crisp plantain chips. It is well presented, well priced and a pleasure to eat.

Of course, it wouldn't be a Mexican meal without enchiladas on the menu. Enchilada de cangejo dulce is baked crab and roasted corn. The delicate taste of crab is rather masked by an overload of melted cheese and tomato purée, but it's a pleasing enough main course (and filling enough to share).

Dessert is a winner. Mousse du chocolate features orange-scented dark chocolate with red chilli. The tartness of the redcurrants on the side brings out the warmth of the chilli. And it's a great, sweet, sharp tinged finale.

Alongside the good food, a friendly ambience helps boost Amerigos. The relaxed vibe carries over into the service – but not in a bad way. This is the type of place where you don't need your water poured for you or napkins laid across your lap. Authentic food with a little originality, good attention to detail plus real value for money make Amerigos a great setting for a social evening – and injects some much awaited life into Yas Island.

Amerigos Mexican Bar and Restaurant

Wednesday, 24 February 2010 19:36

What? Amerigos Mexican Bar and Restaurant

Where? Park Inn Yas Island

Cost: AED 154 per person, excluding drinks and taxes

Why? Great food on Yas without having to blow the budget

Why not? Sometimes, sticking to the original isn't bad; crab is lovely – but not in an enchilada

We say: olé! Gather up friends and make some noise for Amerigos

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