

Moderate fare



Reviewed by: Laura Fulton

If you've been midtown lately, you've probably noticed the ornate sign for Ma Wa Weel. A fixture in the capital, this funky independent restaurant offers a welcome respite from the heat and mayhem outside, with its charming, old style Arabic decor of indistinct origin.

At first glance, the massive menu seems heavy on the Arabic fare with plenty of traditional hot and cold starters, fatted and fatayer. Since hummus and baba ghanoush can hardly go wrong, we opted for the more adventurous Mawaweel Makdous. The spicy baby eggplant was certainly out of the ordinary, but the salt and bite of vinegar slightly overpowered the walnuts and peppers nestled within the eggplant rings.

In contrast, the lentil soup was fresh and flavoursome, the cream of mushroom very creamy and complete with generous chunks of mushrooms. We loved the soujouk – a dish of tasty, mild Armenian beef sausage doused in a scrumptious sauce crafted from tomato, lemon juice and pomegranate molasses. The Greek salad was likewise bursting with fresh, herb packed flavours, and grating the feta kept the powerful cheese from demanding too much attention.

Not quite so flavourful was the baalbakieh, although baked dough stuffed with ground lamb, onion and pine nuts has only so much taste on offer to begin with, no matter how well made. Despite the massive size of the mains, their flavours also lacked any real punch. The grilled salmon was fresh and not too fishy, if a bit dense, while the chicken cordon bleu was extraordinarily ordinary.

Still, if you're looking for good, traditional Arabic food and sheesha in a pleasant, elegant environment right in the middle of the midtown madness, Ma We Weel is a great choice.

**What?** Ma Wa Weel

**Where?** Corner of 9th/Al Falah Street and 2nd/Airport Road

**Cost:** Two can eat like kings for around AED 200

**Why?:** The Arabic options are tasty, the atmosphere pleasant and the World Cup on silent

**Why not?:** The continental options are average at best

**We say:** Pop in if you're in the area – it offers a much nicer ambience than many food courts

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