

Spanish mains



“Mediterranean” usually seems to mean “Lebanese” when applied to eating in Abu Dhabi, but the newly-opened fine dining restaurant at the Yas Links clubhouse continues the Spanish theme of the building – in the menu as much as the ambiance.

True, the background music in Barranca isn’t flamenco; but the generously sized room has a pleasant atmosphere, with a dozen widely-spaced tables and very comfortable chairs under exposed Spanish-style beams and over a terrific parquet and marble-marquetry floor. Candlelight contributes to the ambiance, and so does the service; it’s attentive yet unobtrusive, and it is so relaxing to dine without someone hovering to snatch away the plate as soon as you put down your fork.

The short set menu is definitely European, too. There are only two choices for each of three courses, but their quality makes the fixed price (AED 199) something of a bargain. The tone

was set with the starters, both mouth-wateringly excellent: one was a Catalonian trilogy of seafood featured seared tuna with a surprisingly effective seaweed salad, a prawn-avocado timbale, and a fat mussel with onion and papaya relish, while the brie and mango wrapped in filo and served with an apple-walnut salad was exemplary in its flavoursome simplicity.

Given those clean tastes, the mixed berry sorbet probably wasn't necessary as a palate-cleanser. Still, it's a nice touch (and a good, unsugary sorbet) to take you into the main courses. Char grilled snapper came with the tiniest of baby potatoes, a few beans and a niçoise involving tomato, olives and a red pepper coulis; a nice balance, the kind of thing you wish you could do as well at home. Seared duck breast was the least Mediterranean offering; it could have been pinker, but the rest of the plate – confit leg, leek and bacon hash, kumquat and raisin compote, pearl onions, baby carrots – more than compensated. These dishes sound rather busy, but the portion sizes are spot-on and the balance is good.

To finish there was a cheese selection or brandy snap mille feuille. The cheese was dead right, tasty and at just the right temperature (too many restaurants seem scared to get their cheeses out of the fridge soon enough). The mille feuille was good, though the brandy snap biscuit was more biscuit than the wafer-thin crunchy curl you might have hoped for.

Barranca (the name means a ditch or gully as a hazard on Spanish golf courses) has been in soft-launch mode for nearly a month, but most the hiccups have been ironed out and it's now up and running for real. It's another reason to make the journey on to Yas, and a good one too.

Dennis Jarrett

What? Barranca

Where? Yas Links clubhouse

How much? AED 199 per person

Why? Well-balanced menus, tasty food, nice atmosphere

Why not? Yas Island stills feels a trek from downtown

We say: It will be even better when the terrace is open in a couple of weeks to welcome the cooler season al fresco

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