

That's amore



With all the flash new restaurants coming to Abu Dhabi, you might have missed long time Italian favourite Il Palazzo. Unlike some venues that have declined over the years, the star of the Al Ain Palace hotel has remained consistently excellent for years.

While we were all about the romance, all of our fellow diners were men proving that the ambience is just as appropriate for a family gathering or business meeting as it is for couples. The decor is reminiscent of a Venetian cafe, and the rough brick ceiling warms up the bright, airy room.

Though the menu has changed more than once since opening 11 years ago, the quality of the food has not, thanks to their fresh, quality ingredients. We started with the selection of antipasto starters – shaved meats, olives, crisp salad and sundried tomatoes topped with thick parmesan.

A lot of the old-style dishes at Il Palazzo will make you feel like you've just come in from tending a sundrenched field, like the creamy, chunky wild mushroom soup which is quite possibly the best in town.

We loved the Tagliatelle Il Palazzo; unlike some of the more expensive places in the capital, the chefs at Il Palazzo understand that the cigali (lobster) shell is purely for presentation and the meat is for eating, making it less of a mission to dig through the sauce to eat your seafood pasta.

The chef's special ribeye served on a bed of baby spinach and topped with parmesan was nothing short of gorgeous, and the atmosphere is relaxed enough we had no problem picking up the roasted spare ribs and eating them with our hands.

Though you'll have a tough time leaving room, you really should try because the light, creamy tiramisu is outstanding – pretty much like everything else.

Laura Fulton

What? Il Palazzo

Where? Al Ain Palace Hotel

Cost: You'll fall in love – most items between AED 30 and 70; nothing on the menu over AED 150

Why? More than one first date at Il Palazzo has ended in nuptials – that's romantic

Why not? The amorous lightings means the white print on the red menus can be a bit tough to read

We say: The epitome of true a Italian venue – an excellent menu with something for everyone

Contact: 02 679 4777