

Regal dining



Those not already familiar with Royal Orchid, located within Hilton Abu Dhabi, probably first describe the venue as a little unusual; no natural light, some interesting taste in décor (perhaps a little dated, but none the less comfortable) and a rather intriguing light fitting that spans most of the ceiling space in the venue.

But those familiar with it will certainly know one thing for sure; first appearances are most definitely deceiving.

The venue in fact carries a great atmosphere; packed with a mix of diners, Royal Orchid thrives off a busy energy. Service is a little slower than some of the newer venues in the capital, but don't let that put you off; it just allows more time to enjoy each dish – and there's plenty to choose from.

Dining at a Thai spot wouldn't be complete without injecting some heat into each dish. A perfectly spicy clear soup – swimming with sumptuously fat prawns and other seafood staples – warms the mouth nicely.

We were recommended the crispy squid with chilli, garlic and coriander for starters, but found the squid to be reminiscent of overcooked calamari – a little rubbery and tough. All the spice and flavours appeared to be hidden underneath the pile of crispy squid; a helping of the accompanying sweet chilli sauce lifted the dish: perfectly pleasant – but perhaps not the most outstanding of starts to lead you on to main courses.

Crispy lamb Beijing style does everything and more to redeem an average starter; the perfectly tender strips of lamb are marinated in a sticky, sweet chilli sauce – just enough kick, but not so overpowering as to mask any of the flavour from the meat. An assortment of rice or noodle options serve as perfect side dishes to mix in.

Thai venues aren't generally known for standard desserts, but if you're feeling adventurous, the more authentic and usual desserts on offer are worth a try. The chilled mango cream with sago pearls is the perfect palette cooler. With a subtle, almost oatey taste, it's light and intriguing – and well recommended.

Royal Orchid lacks the shine of newer venues – and the slicker service – but stick around. The cosy interior, welcoming staff and constant bustle of this eatery make dining a treat. You feel as if you've stumbled into real Abu Dhabi dining once more: no frills, no fuss, just good, wholesome food and company. What more could you ask for?

Charlie Kennedy

What? Royal Orchid

Where? Hilton Abu Dhabi

Cost: A couple can happily dine for AED 300, sparing drinks

Why? Generous portions, fantastic presentation, and a clear amount of thought and skill from the chefs

Royal Orchid

Wednesday, 27 October 2010 00:00

Why not? Go with time on your side; it's not speedy service, but it's worth the wait

We say: There's also a Royal Orchid located just off Salam St – well worth checking out too

Contact: 02 681 3883