



Sometimes eating at a chain restaurant can feel a little sterile, with no differentiation between whichever outlet you choose. That's the point, of course – you know what you're getting, whether it's Abu Dhabi or Zanzibar.

Refreshingly, this isn't the case at The Meat Company at the Souk.

Inside the restaurant the set up is rather cosy and relaxed – and with an obvious South African theme. There are plush cushions lining the wall seats and sunken TV screens playing a series of African tribal dances. The video makes for some good background entertainment; but the screens are a little off-putting if your companion starts taking more interest in the dancing than you ...

We've opted for a lunchtime treat at The Meat Co and the restaurant is a little quiet. Luckily for us, this means we're instantly greeted by attentive and friendly staff and soon debating over the extensive menu choice.

Coming to a restaurant with 'meat' in the title obviously means we're already halfway through the dining decision, but it is nice to note that there is a seafood selection should you ever tire of steak.

We start with a meze platter to share. The dish offers a mix of everything ideal to set the palette for the main course. Surprisingly, it's the fish appetisers on the plate that get the most praise. The lightly battered calamari with a slightly peppered seasoning is mouth-wateringly good and the king prawns deliver a sharp and spicy punch with the marinade. The beef sausage with a creamy mash is good, as are the spinach and mushroom croûte and beef fillet – though perhaps not best placed on a sharing dish. There's no grumbling, though, as the plate is emptied.

We find our appetites again with the arrival of the main courses – Australian lamb cutlets and South African beef fillet Rossini with a side serving of mash potato and spinach. The potato looks distinctly normal, but the spinach raises a few eyebrows – the menu-writer forgot to mention the spinach is put through the blender beforehand to offer a rather mushy, light green puree. It tastes delicious, but it's a bit of a surprise if you're expecting leaves.

The meats however surpass expectations. The lamb falls from the bone and is tender with a delicate, slightly sweet marinade which doesn't mask the flavours. And of course, there's a serving of fresh mint sauce.

The Rossini is also a delight. Topped with chicken liver, the sauce is layered with ground peppercorns that come with a kick. The fillet is cooked to perfection and shows the chef really knows how to cook meat.

The mains shouldn't take all the credit. The mashed potato – such a simple side order - couldn't garner any more praise: it was light, creamy and smooth. We're soon piling our plates high and

couldn't get enough.

Overall, an outing at The Meat Co is a must. Great food, great staff and a great concept do the restaurant justice. Meat is what they do, and boy do they do it well.

**What?** The Meat Co

**Where?** Souk, Qaryat Al Beri

**How much?** AED 629 including shared starter, two main courses and drinks

**Why?** Extensive selection of meat and the best mashed potato for miles around

**Why not?** Conversation may dry up if your company is distracted by the TV screens

**Rated:** 8/10

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[Originally published in Abu Dhabi Week vol 2 issue 20]