



I've always been more than a little suspicious of fish restaurants. How many times have I taken the plunge and opted for fish over the more traditional 'meat feast' experience, only to be left with the bitter taste of disappointment

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The choice is often too limited. Or the taste is so often drowned by some convoluted sauce concoction that simply masks the disappointment of being served a very bland product in the first place. In short, I find that fish restaurants which serve dishes where you can really enjoy the actual taste of good fresh fish without restriction or complication are few and far between.

So it was with some trepidation that I elected to sample the Fishmarket at the Intercontinental Hotel. The restaurant comes with an established reputation; could it actually live up to it?

The entrance to the restaurant itself is discreet and almost hidden, but stepping inside reveals the kind of familiar setting that one feels should accompany a fish restaurant. The ambience is bright but relaxed, thanks to the scrubbed wood interior, and the initial greeting is warm.

En route to my table I pass the sight that is really the heart of the restaurant the fish counter. In front of me lay one of the biggest arrays of fish of all shapes and sizes that I have ever had the joy to see – more like ... well, a Fishmarket than a five star eatery!

To begin with I am offered a canapés of deep fried hamour with accompanying soya, sweet chilli and green chilli dips. Certainly an unexpected beginning, and welcome apart from the fact that the portion is more generous than some other restaurants would serve as a main course. Be warned: to indulge too much too early could easily kill even the healthiest appetite.

Then, before one can utter the words "Jacques Cousteau", one of the helpful waiters ushers me to the tiers of fish. Not only is he super friendly and very knowledgeable, his input is essential for this type of restaurant. With shopping basket in hand he begins to lead me along the lines of assorted fish, explaining not only which is which but suggesting cooking options from poaching to grilling to deep frying and advising on sauces.

To start we choose a selection of lobster, scallop and giant shrimp. He suggests a red chilli sauce for the lobster, a Thai curry for the shrimp and a green curry for the scallops. For mains we select a plump fish called sherry, a sea bass look-alike with a similar taste. I am persuaded that a selection of the fresh vegetables on display and a portion of the seafood noodles would be an ideal side dish.

The starter arrives. Each mouthful is a delight, even allowing the taste of the individual fish to come through –especially scallop in green curry. But the mixture of sauces tends to be overpowering and indistinctive after a while, so it be better to to limit yourself in the selection process.

The sherry fillets arrive pan-seared and unadorned. A lemon garlic sauce arrives separately; I

opt to taste the fillet without any sauce initially, a wise move since I can sample the fish itself. The sherry is cooked to perfection, moist and meaty. And the accompanying sauce (just a little) proves a worthy partner, adding a touch of spice without being overpowering. The side dishes of stir-fried vegetables and noodles were as advised more than sufficient and a good complement. Don't expect to have a quick dinner here. A meal at the Fishmarket is to be lingered over to do it justice. For once, I have found a fish restaurant that does live up to its reputation. A good 'catch'.

What? Fishmarket

Where? Intercontinental Hotel

How much? From AED 260 per person

Why? Good array of fish and fish dishes, relaxed atmosphere

Why not? Can be costly– and beware of masking the fish with too much spicy sauce

Rated:8/10

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