



Ushna reportedly means “beautiful girl”, but it’s also an expression of hedonistic enthusiasm – and it’s Abu Dhabi’s newest Indian restaurant, offering classic cooking at Qaryat al Beri prices. We visited a couple of days after it opened ...

There is no shortage of Indian eateries in Abu Dhabi. There isn’t even a shortage of upmarket Indian restaurants, the kind of place that takes the basic techniques and ingredients but elevates the cooking and the presentation to levels at which the restaurateur can charge a premium price for a premium service. So do we need Ushna, newly arrived in the Souk Qaryat al Beri as an outpost of the Dubai original?

You certainly can’t fault the location. All the Qaryat al Beri waterside restaurants get a view of the best building in town, the Grand Mosque. Admittedly the foreground is cluttered with cranes and building works, but it’s still gob-smackingly beautiful.

So is Ushna itself, as it happens. The situation sets high expectations, and indeed the staff, décor and place settings are all elegantly adorned. Inside the tables are a tad regimented, but on the terrace there’s bags of room; and even on a quietish midweek evening there was a nice buzz about the place – the chilled house music helped, and so did the cheery service. An amuse-bouche of one mini bahji and a glass of granita was a nifty palate cleanser, too.

Starters were excellent, and they were starter-sized: enough to convince the tongue that things were getting under way, not so much to persuade the stomach that it was time to stop eating. Machli Tawa was griddled hamour, which was ok but could have done with more spices; Murch Chatpatta is a real starlet, a cold sweet-sour salad of tandoor chicken that had coriander and tamarind flavours in there with a bit of chilli heat. And Resha Galouti is worth the trip all by itself – an unpromising sounding dish of shredded lamb patties, basically Indian hamburgers that were light, fresh, tasty and mercifully free of grease.

Ushna’s cooking roots probably lie in the north of the subcontinent. There’s a decent selection of tandoor dishes, but it was also good to see some of the more interesting veggie options – like

Tandoori Sabzi, mixed vegetables marinated in vinegar and spices, or the cauliflower with tomatoes and ginger dish called Gobhi Ke Sabzi.

Our main courses were Jingha Wali Mirch and Murch Makini. The latter is butter chicken, a staple of North Indian cooking that involves long marinating in yoghurt and the chef's choice of spices – a hint of fenugreek, in this case. It was tasty enough, but could have been a bit pokier.

Jingha are prawns, and the wali mirch is a gravy that's been cooking slowly for several hours. As with the chicken sauce, it was thick without being stodgy; and in neither case had the meat been stewed in it, just cooked separately and added towards the end. The result was a spectacular depth of flavour, the kind of unfolding resonances you get from a fine wine.

We finished with desserts, always a bit of a hit-and-miss decision in an Indian restaurant; if you don't have a sweet tooth you might be better skipping this course. They were interesting though: fennel and ginger ice cream was distinctive, mandarins orbet could've had more flavour, Rasmali (dumpling in a rose water cream) was a bit stodgy. But do try the green apple ice cream; it tastes of apple – or maybe apple pie – and wasn't at all the watery, thin favour you get from most apple sorbets and ice creams. Shame the other sweets didn't live up to this standard. We enjoyed Ushna. The food was classic Indian in a contemporary setting, as promised, and there were no overambitious or misjudged fusion ideas at play here – just very good sauces and very confident cooking. Definitely value for money, not least because of the setting.

**What?** Ushna

**Where?** The Souk Qaryat Al Beri

**How much?** AED275 per person including drinks

**Why?** Deep flavours, confident cooking, great location

**Why not?** Not enough chilli for some, too many cranes in the eyeline

**Rated:** 8/10

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**More information:**

Ushna ushers in a new era of classic Indian cuisine for the capital

Blend the tastes of the best traditional Indian cuisine available with the sumptuous and sophisticated contemporary surroundings created by two of the major names in today's world of interior design, and you have conjured the unique taste of Ushna – the latest and most fashionable Indian restaurant to take the Abu Dhabi culinary scene by storm.

Nestling in the elegant setting of the Souk Qaryat Al Beri, Ushna serves up an innovative mix of authentic classic North Indian cuisine, an elegantly designed venue and attentive staff.

Ushna has a range of specialty dishes to suit each guest's discerning taste, from appetisers to desserts.

Our tandoor specialities are there to entice you, succulent dishes marinated with the perfect blending of herbs and spices that will certainly delight your palate.

Alternatively, choose from a variety of vegetarian dishes perfect for those who prefer lighter, healthier meals such as Tandoori Sabzi – glazed mixed vegetables marinated in vinegar and spices; Biryani Sabaz Bahar – garden fresh vegetables cooked with rice and herbs and spices; or Gobhi Ke Sabzi – an excellent Indian homemade delicacy of fresh cauliflower with ginger and tomatoes, to name a few.

Ushna comfortably seats 100 indoors and a further 45 on the terrace with its stunning views of the nearby Grand Mosque, as well as a bar and lounge for 30 customers.

Ushna's sophisticated interiors were created by internationally renowned award winning architect and designer Steve Leung.

The Hong Kong born designer's modern, stylish interiors with deep, rich colours that exude warmth, giving the décor an opulent feel that perfectly complements the soothing and sophisticated lighting created by award-winning technician Tino Kwan.

Restaurant Manager Sasi Ganesan and his assistant Azeem Khan are waiting to provide you with the warmest possible welcome, while Executive Chef Amrish Sood will be on hand to prepare mouth-watering dishes to suit even the most discerning palette, and the whole team

assures you of delightful and knowledgeable service.

**For reservations, please call 02 558 1769 or email [ushna.auh@ushna.ae](mailto:ushna.auh@ushna.ae).**