

Hidden delights



We're not going to lie - finding Royal Orchid's Salaam Street branch is a bit of a mission. Tucked away amongst the apartment blocks in the corner made by Salaam Street and Electra Street, close to both ADCB and ADNOC, this restaurant is not as easy to find as it's twin in the Hilton Abu Dhabi, but it is so worth the effort.

We are fans of the Hilton Abu Dhabi branch, and so when we were offered the chance to try the Salaam Street branch as well we thought "why not", grabbed a friend and battled our way to the restaurant for some Thai treats.

No trip to a Thai restaurant is complete if we don't start with tom yam soup, and this time we went for the tom yam gung – full of prawns and flavour, the soup was light and bold and just right to begin our meal.

We ordered a portion of Thod Mann Pla (fish cakes) and the Fish Salad with Green Mango from the Thai Festival Menu – which was supposed to be only for a limited time, but the dishes proved so popular with customers that it stayed. The fish cakes were so fresh and delicious, chewy and moist with a fantastic hot dipping sauce made with chilis and cucumber slices. The fish salad was delightfully surprising – perfectly fried pieces of hammour were tender and soft while the green mango managed to be both sharp and sweet creating the perfect dish of crunchy, tangy soft and a little sweet. Yum.

For our main courses we had difficulty ordering. We knew we had to try the Crab Massaman Curry, but we couldn't decide between the Crispy Fish Topped with Chilli and Ginger and the Thai Style Garlic Prawns – all from the festival menu. Without the least embarrassment, we ordered all three. All the dishes were absolutely delicious, however the star of the show was the Thai Style Garlic Prawns. The plate was a little surprising when it arrived – the prawns are served with chips and steamed vegetables – but the flavour was simply amazing. We could not stop eating, and even when all the prawns were gone we resorted to dipping the chips in the sauce. This is one that you must not miss out on.

Unfortunately, after all of that, we didn't have room for desert but we already know that next time we're going for the Kao Neaw Manuang – sweet Thai rice steamed in coconut milk and served with mango. Doesn't it sound like heaven on a plate?

Anna McCormack

What? Royal Orchid Restaurant

Where: Salaam/Electra Streets, behind ADCB and ADNOC

Cost: Appetisers from AED 30, main dishes from AED 45

We say: The reward is worth the quest

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