

Here at Abu Dhabi Week towers, we love Porto Bello – the Italian restaurant at the Grand Millennium Al Wahda Hotel. So when they told us about their new diabetic menu, being the health conscious magazine that we are, we simply had to see if they could make diabetic friendly food as good as the regular stuff



The spacious ground floor restaurant is an oasis of calm when we arrive at lunch time, with a scattering of business types enjoying their business lunches. Nicely settled in the comfy chairs we are handed the menu and took a good look at what was on offer. The diabetic menu isn't huge: two starters, two soups, two salads, two sandwiches, two mains and three desserts. But there are enough combination options to see you through many a meal out.

Figuring we were going to go for a nice round three-courser we decided to leave room for dessert and go for a soup instead of the Greek prawns kebabs starter that caught our eye. The shrimp coriander soup was an extremely flavourful yet delicate clear broth, packed with prawns and coriander and with just enough fried garlic to not overpower the soup but make sure we'd want mints for when we headed back to the office.

Though we were tempted by the delicious-sounding sandwiches on offer, we were utterly distracted by the filet mignon minute steak. Steak? On a diabetic friendly menu? We had to try it. Predicting a teeny portion of meat – it's meant to be healthy, right? – we were delighted when the plate came out, heaving with two ginormous cuts of steak balanced upon a mound of steamed barley and with beautifully fresh and crisp florets of broccoli and cauliflower adding a splash of colour. A generous serving of peppercorn sauce on the side completed the show.

We find it difficult to get excited about steamed veg, but the cauliflower and broccoli were perfectly cooked and lightly seasoned – making them excellent little palate cleansers, balancing the rest of the rich dish. Yes, you heard that right – rich! The steak was a little overcooked for our liking, but was delicious nonetheless. The barley was spicy and cooked to perfection, enhanced by the wonderful peppercorn sauce that was full of wonderful, meaty, gravy savour. We just kept eating and eating and eating. After all of that, we are ashamed to admit that we couldn't even contemplate dessert – not even the chocolate mousse that kept calling out to us – just a good strong espresso to keep us awake at our desks back at the office.

This menu is surprising in the size of its portions and the flavour of the food. Because the Chef, who is diabetic himself, has to work without the usual trappings of restaurant food – lots of fat and lots of sugar – the flavours of the ingredients really have to shine through.

Anna McCormack

What? Diabetic menu at Porto Bello

Where? Grand Millennium Al Wahda Hotel

Cost: Starters from AED 70, mains from AED 110

We say: It's great to have healthy eating made easy, and delicious!

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