



The Heritage Village in Abu Dhabi is a tranquil nod back to an earlier time in Abu Dhabi – and the eatery choices at Al Asalah echo the vibe perfectly. With the blue waters of the Abu Dhabi breakwater providing the sparkling backdrop for the Al Asalah restaurant, the dining experience is pleasurable before even entering the venue.

Nestling in the grounds of the Heritage Village between Marina Mall and the national flag post, the setting is serene, traditional and welcoming. Uninterrupted views of the Corniche sets the restaurant apart, and a scenic vista of old and new Abu Dhabi is framed by the large windows in the generously sized dining space. This charming, traditional spot takes you away from the buzz of the modern city and back to simpler pleasures.

The menu is an extensive buffet of cold and hot dishes. The choice also includes a fresh market-style fish display and a range of meats, all of which can be grilled on the spot to your preference.

It's so substantial that it is best to pace yourself – to leave the restaurant without having managed to sample everything on offer would be a disappointing feeling. We realised our eyes were bigger than our bellies and had to forgo the delightful array of delicately presented desserts.

The cold choices – a delicious mix of dips and salads – make vegetarian dining a pleasure, even if you like your meat. With all the usual regional staples that measure up to good wholesome Arabic cuisine, you can expect tabouleh, dates and stuffed vine leaves, all of which make pleasing appetisers. The smooth and creamy moutabel (aka moutabbal, an aubergine dip) is a highlight among the cold starters, and the chilli sauce perched on top of the buffet display will tempt empty plates into a top-up.

It's also easy to fill up on the freshly baked, traditional bread that arrives at the table, still warm, as the ideal accompaniment to your appetizers.

None of the dishes are short on flavour. And the dining experience goes further than the food or the situation. All the waiting staff are attentive and knowledgeable.

Anyone sold on the surrounding views can climb aboard one of the two dhows owned by the restaurant to take in the scenery while dining on the calm waters of the Corniche.

Al Salah is another gem in Abu Dhabi's eatery crown; the restaurant is all about fresh produce and good quality, great preparation and simply good traditional food. It's a shame that the spacious restaurant isn't as busy as it should be.

The only thing missing from the venue is an atmosphere – fill up those seats with a group of friends or family and it'll be transformed into the popular eatery Al Asalah deserves to be.

Al Asalah restaurant

Thursday, 17 September 2009 00:00

What? Al Asalah restaurant

Where? Inside the Heritage Village, along the breakwater

How much? From AED 90

Why? A delightful selection of real Arabic tastes and an arguably unbeatable view

Why not? Not an ideal spot for an intimate meal; take a crowd to make up for the lack of atmosphere

Rated:

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