

If, like us, you're huge fans of Italian food, you'll no doubt have visited Frankie's Italian Restaurant & Bar at Fairmont Bab Al Bahr many times



Relaxed and delicious food in an unpretentious setting – it ticks all the boxes.

This month though we were offered a real treat: a chance to go behind the scenes and take a master cooking class from the man himself – chef de cuisine Andrea Biccini.

With our crisp white apron and hat on, chef Biccini and the charming general manager Giorgio Cingolani, informed us that we would be attempting to make homemade gnocchi.

Slightly daunted we soon discovered that making good gnocchi is all about selecting the right potatoes (russets) and flour (Italy's finest, of course), after that it's just about technique. Hmm ...

Thankfully Biccini is there to do the hard bit for us – pushing all the cooked potato through a metal sieve to create what we can only describe as potato fluff. Next we add a few egg yolks, a handful of flour and a swift dusting of nutmeg, before getting our hands dirty and blending it into a smooth dough.

Dusted with flour and covered with a cloth to keep it moist, we break off chunks of the dough and roll them out into long, skinny sausage shapes, before dusting in flour again and cutting them into gnocchi-sized pieces.

The array of sauces we could try our hands at making is not quite as straightforward. We have a go at tomato, basil and Parmesan while chef Biccini puts us to shame with a prawn and cream sauce – to die for!

Despite some slightly odd-shaped gnocchi, which Andrea assures us only adds to its rustic charm, we're pretty impressed with our first attempt. And we even have enough to take home for dinner!

This is the first in a series of cooking classes to be held at Frankie's Italian Restaurant & Bar as Giorgio and Andrea still have plenty up their sleeves so watch this space ...

Megan Wynes

What? Italian Cooking Class

Where: Frankie's Italian Restaurant & Bar at Fairmont Bab Al Bahr

When: Tuesdays 10.30 to 12.30pm until 24th April

We say: Take the full series of classes and learn a full Italian menu!

Cost: AED 390++ (not including lunch, at extra cost)

Contact: 02 654 3333 or email: dining.bab@fairmont.com