

Buon appetito!



On hearing about the newly opened APi CAE restaurant, our first thought was ‘Italian food – lets go!’ and our second thought was ‘unusual name’.

The name APi CAE (pronounced Appy K) actually comes from a collection of ancient Italian cooking manuscripts of the same name, produced in Roman Italy in the fourth and fifth century, and reflects the ethos of the modern-day APi CAE chefs who use traditional Italian food preparatory methods and recipes.

The APi CAE interior features earthy colours, rustic stonework and a cascading water feature. A sampling counter runs the length of the restaurant and displays a serving of every meal. Staff helpfully answer questions about the cuisine and tell us the organic ingredients are sourced from Italy.

We prowl up and down a few times before stopping at the salad section where the insalata mista (mixed green-leaf salad) with sundried tomatoes catches our eye. We move on to the main course section comprising calzones, salmon and steamed vegetables, roast chicken with mustard sauce, pasta carbonara, pizza and more. The ricotta calzone looks divine – melted cheese oozes out from the lightly browned pastry shell, nice!

After the briefest of waits the calzone is served to our table, and it doesn't disappoint. We savour every delectable mouthful of crumbly ricotta smothered in mozzarella snuggled in light pastry, and served with fresh, crunchy green salad drizzled in balsamic vinegar. APi CAE are on to a winner with this dish.

Later we check out the desserts, our mouth waters at the exquisite array of colourful cakes, puff pastries and biscotti. We're not hungry but feel that it's our duty to sample something sweet. The Italian pastry chef obviously takes great pride in food presentation; the cakes are topped with intricately arranged slivers of fresh strawberries and pineapple.

We go for the strawberry cheesecake. There's an old Italian saying 'l'appetito vien mangiando,' which means 'the appetite comes while you're eating' and so it would appear as we devour the tangy, sweet slice.

We leave full but certainly not empty handed. APi CAE prides itself on its bread because it's baked using traditional methods incorporating slow-acting sourdough yeast, making it easier to digest than other types of bread. We buy some to take home and are pleased by the reasonable prices; the mini-ciabatta costs AED 6. The varieties – raisin and apricot, and saffron with olives – are quite unusual in comparison to our typical shop-bought sliced loaf and taste great.

***Catriona Doherty***

**What?** APi CAE

**Where:** Block A, Khalidiya Tower, behind NBAD and Veneto

**Cost:** Salads from AED 25 and mains from AED 35

**We say:** Friendly staff, commendable and inexpensive Italian food ... it's definitely worth a visit

**Contact:** 02 666 8909