

We hardly ever make it out to the Central Market but after a lovely visit this week, we'll be certainly back



We've been invited to check out the newest version of the Lebanese restaurant, Tarbouche La Basha, that's been somewhat of an institution here in the Capital since the 80s. In desperate need of a satisfying meal, we headed over to investigate.

Named after the traditional red fez the servers wear on their heads, this restaurant is tucked into a corner near the courtyard of the ground floor. With plenty of tables and seats on offer outside the restaurant, we chose a table near the entrance and settle in. The dim lighting and grid-like dark wooden panels that decorate the walls of the Central Market make for a rather tranquil atmosphere and hint to the slow, relaxed meal to come.

The menu has plenty on offer, filled with traditional Lebanese cuisine and a few Oriental offers, we settle on a variety of mezze to start. In addition to the heaped bowl of hummus served with

tandoori naan bread of all things, we order a variety of hot and cold appetisers.

First up are the famous falafels. The plate of eight crispy, sesame seed topped balls is served on a bed of sumac, and revs up our appetites. As we bite into the crispy shells, the warm falafels melt in our mouth. Topped with a generous dollop of the tahini dipping sauce, we make quick work of clearing the plate. Next up is the tabouleh salad; this lemony mixture of parsley, mint, onions and bulgur instantly transports us back to our recent holiday to Beirut. Fresh, zesty and absolutely delicious, this acts as a great palate cleanser for us.

On to the mains, we order an enormous platter of shish taouk, which comes with three bulging skewers of marinated chicken fresh off the grill. Served with a grilled tomato, onion, pita bread and a huge side of garlic dipping sauce – they certainly don't skimp on portion sizes. The spiced chicken skewers are perfectly cooked, juicy and surprisingly spicy – we're hooked.

Gorgeous surroundings, great service and delicious food – we are delighted with this Lebanese find!

Sawaiba Khan

What? Tarbouche La Basha

Where? The Souk, Central Market

Cost: Appetisers, AED 20 to 30; mains from AED 40 to 80

We say: Some of the best Lebanese we've had south of the border

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