

FOOD

REVIEW • RESTAURANT LISTINGS



Our Maiden voyage to this Palm eatery

DAVID LIGHT

david@khaleefjtimes.com

A NEW CHINESE bistro. In a town inundated with Far Eastern cuisine, to be absolutely up front, we weren't particularly enthused when we first heard about Maiden Shanghai's arrival on our culinary landscape. Our local hole-in-the-wall, close to work, is frequented at least once a week and actually serves up some pretty good dim sum. Then there's strong representation from at least two of the major malls, a couple of takeaways and decent spots in DIFC and around the Deira Clocktower. However, two elements regarding Maiden piqued our interest (three if you count the restaurant's private karaoke room): the decor is inspired by 1930s Shanghai and the flavours promised to be some of the most authentic you can find this side of the Hunagpu. To give you a little preview, on both counts the eatery is just about spot on. While the ambi-

ence wasn't particularly retro, it did possess elements of the Chinese city's classic glamour, but it was with the food and the service that we were most impressed. Genuine and bursting with fresh, crisp zest, the recipes are superb, as are the staff's efforts at making you feel more than welcome.

Heading down to the FIVE Palm Jumeirah hotel on a Wednesday evening, we were unaware that it was ladies' night at the restaurant's upstairs terrace. Complimentary bubbly between 8 and 10pm meant the crowds ascending for two-hours of freebie action in Maiden's dedicated elevator made for a lively introduction. The dining room on the first floor, while busy, was thankfully not thronging with party-goers. Mood lighting, intimate table settings and the clinking of cutlery and glasses, you could even say it was going to be a mellow experience. The fiesta of flavour, though, soon arrived.

Every dish in Maiden is MSG-free, which dictates the chef must rely on their skill alone to tease out every last

drop of salty, sweet and sour goodness. They accomplished this with aplomb.

The first round of our banquet promptly arrived one drink in: some straight-up salt and pepper squid, shredded beef with carrot in Shanghai Sauce and crispy prawn and Chilean seabass roll. While the orders may not have been the most adventurous, we were more in the mood for going for some firm favourites rather than a journey of exploration. It paid off. Rather than fine-dining as such, although the quality was excellent, what arrived was a more home-cooked affair. This always leads to a big tick from us. You could tell the plates had been thought about. The same went for the second course. De-boned lamb with scallion and soya sauce, Kung Pao lobster and a bit of rice were all lovely, but it was with the traditional Peking duck where we went 'quackers'. It is so simple, as you're probably well aware, but absolutely delicious and will have us returning as soon as humanly possible. We're sure you'll feel the same.



Where: Maiden Shanghai, FIVE Palm Jumeirah
Best dish: Peking duck
Avg. cost per person: Dhs250

