

With 20.7 million international tourists visiting the UAE in 2017* and with expatriate residents making up 80% of the population*, you'd expect everyone to be trying Emirati cuisine.

But it isn't so, and only recently have traditional Emirati restaurants begun to operate outside of the family-oriented feast-and-wedding delivery business, where one can order a superb dinner of lamb and rice for 20+ people but not really dine-in.

But then Al Fanar Restaurant & Cafe happened, and with a resounding success!



In Al Ain, Al Fanar is hosted in a traditional-style building - almost like a living museum of Emirati culinary heritage.



On the wall are photos from yesteryear, from the National Archives.



And outside, a remarkable courtyard offers a wonderful dining space for families.



As well as privacy cubicles made from traditional materials





Al Fanar Restaurant & Cafe in Al Ain

Al Fanar itself now operates seven branches in the UAE, one in Riyadh, and their London restaurant will be opening soon!

They are the authentic Emirati traditional food ambassadors of the UAE!





Al Fanar Restaurant & Cafe in Al Ain

Inside, the restaurant is in full swing, and the menu is delectable, with an excellent selection of dishes, as well as fresh fish section.







The food quality is excellent, and it is clear that Al Fanar takes its professionalism seriously - although 130km from the sea, the fish was superbly fresh, and prepared with a marination that made it tasty and delicious, while still cooked on hot coals in authentic traditional method.





A perfectly cooked and presented fish!

Besides the amazing and tasteful architecture and concept of authentic decor, I think this is where Al Fanar has really excelled: you see, traditional cooking, when taken outside of Grandma's kitchen, is very difficult to sustain at an operational level - the techniques are outdated, and that is where Al Fanar has managed to bring a modern logistical support system to present an authentic dining experience of 21st century quality.

The food and sauces were absolutely delicious and unique.

Although I don't have an Emirati Grandma, I'm sure she would approve!





Tangy mango and rocket salad





Baked sliced potatoes





And a superb rendition of a Prawn Biryani!





With carefully curated attention to details







And dessert was a happy ending to a fine meal!





Al Fanar Restaurant & Cafe in Al Ain

So happy, in fact, that I would heartily recommend that every visitor and expat experience a proper, authentic, and traditional Emirati meal at least once if their visit is short, and as part of a routine schedule of eating-out if living in the UAE - it was such a lovely dining experience!







*according to <https://www.statista.com/statistics/674110/uae-international-tourist-arrivals/>

*according to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expatriates_in_the_United_Arab_Emirates