

Once in a lifetime chance, organized by the good people at Abu Dhabi Culinary Season, for the benefit of the UAE's capital epicureans, the Chef's Table invites you to dine at a top selection of fine-dining restaurants, as personal guest of the Chef.

At Market Kitchen restaurant, Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi, Chef Jhon Fonseca was our host.



Besides the honor of meeting and chatting with this up-and-coming Chef of great talent and Michelin-star restaurant experience, and especially gaining an insider's view as to the menu presented, dinner at Market Kitchen is an occasion in itself any night of the week!

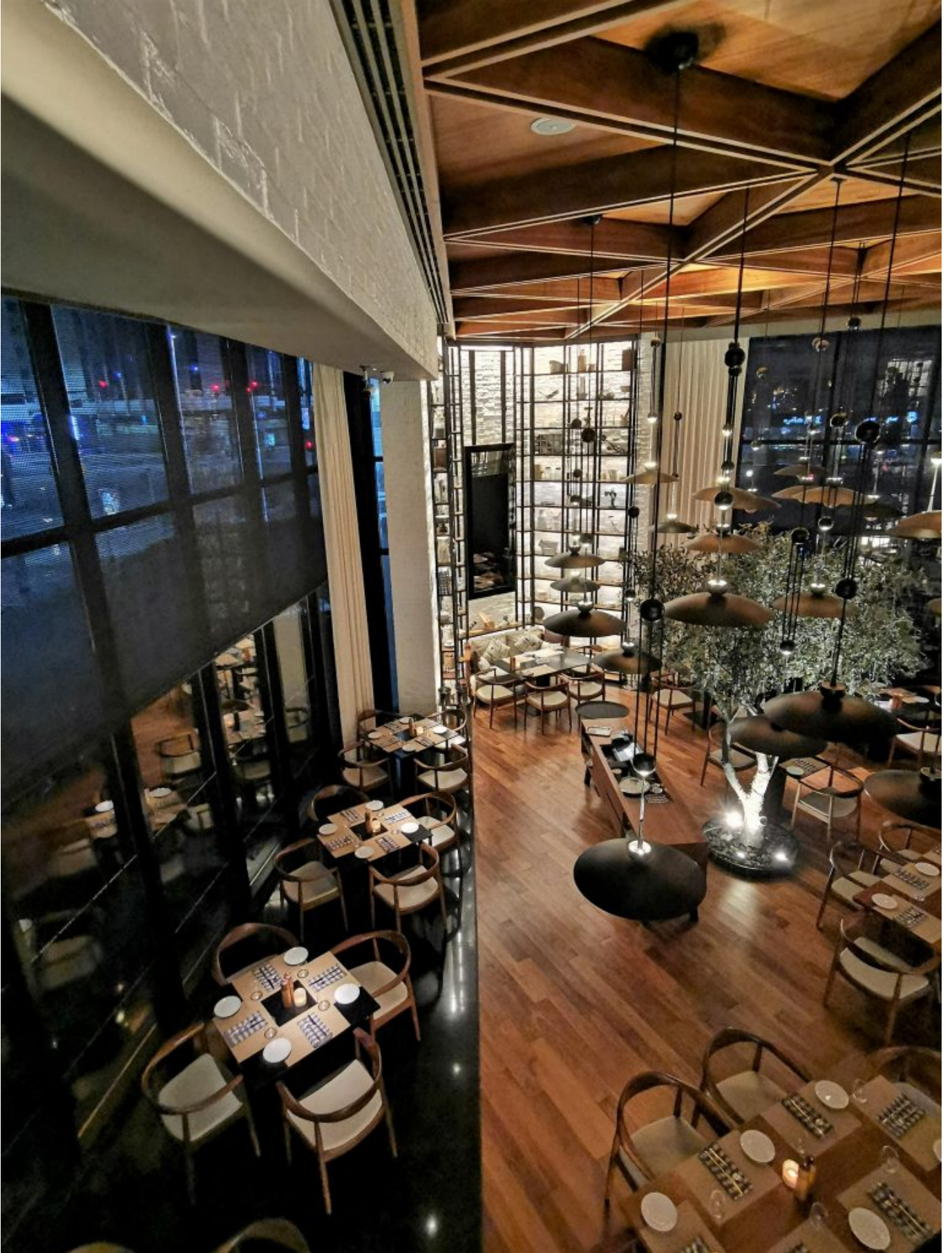




Chef's Table at Market Kitchen, Le Royal Meridien Abu Dhabi

An exquisite decor presents an air of entertainment, even quirky ticklish fun of the extemporaneous kind...







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...while in the same breath also offering a sophisticated and classy ambiance worthy of top-level gourmet dining.





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An *apertif* at the bar to start off with? Don't mind if I do!

Martini bianco, please, shaken - not stirred, of course



What a delight!

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As we move into the dining area,



... the menu is surprisingly simple and to-the-point... three items, three courses.

But if you, like me, feel it's a bit too simple, please take my advice and be patient: each of those three "simple" dishes were absolute culinary masterpieces!

Of the kind that at the first bite your eyelids shut and your throat spontaneously starts making sounds of complete ecstasy while you rock to and fro in your seat - because that's exactly what those three "simple" but magnificently curated dishes are designed to do.

The flavors take over your brain.

You are under Chef Fonseca's spell, and there is nothing you can do about it!

Let's take the starter: Tuna Sashimi... you think you've had sashimi before, right? It's just raw fish on some rice, and you dip it in soya sauce, maybe add some wasabi if you're adventurous...

Oh not at all!

At The Chef's Table, the sashimi is from outer space!

It is an alien hedonistic creation that will blow your mind - I promise you. I almost passed out it was so astonishingly amazing! The flavors come in waves, and the complexity of what is, actually, just raw fish and rice, is astounding.



And the Chef told me exactly what tricks and secrets went into that preparation... and while I already knew how elaborate the attention to detail is in fine-dining, I was really able to appreciate the depth of thought and care that went into the amalgamation of culinary art and science required to produce a "simple" chunk of rice-fish.

And please allow me a personal note here. If you love delicious food, and I think you do since you're reading this, you must immediately find out where the next Chef's Table is being planned - because even if it is only once a year, or even once in a lifetime, any car enthusiast would jump at the opportunity to drive a Rolls-Royce... and that's exactly the experience equivalent for a gourmet diner - for 199 dirham, I not only drove the Rolls of fine-dining, but I was accompanied by the Chief Designer and Engineer, who shared his thoughts with me - that is priceless.





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The second dish, the main course, was equally if not more amazing...



And then the good Chef said: "You know what, may I make you something from my culinary culture? Just to try..."

A few minutes later - oh, you think I was shy and said no? - directly from the recipes of Colombian tradition, Chef Jhon presented this playful ceviche at the table:





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You see, that's the extemporaneous fun element of Market Kitchen - and when you are chatting with the Chef himself, unexpected things happen!

And I think I'm booking my ticket to Colombia tomorrow... the *leche de tigre* sauce of that ceviche made up my mind on the spot... we did say extemporaneous, didn't we?

But, like all good things, the evening had to come to an end - a happy ending, with again a taste-bud-exploding third course: the dessert!





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All in all, in the context of what now must be 500+ restaurant reviews, many at the highest level on the international stage, The Chef's Table in Abu Dhabi, at Le Royal Meridien, hosted in person by Chef Jhon Fonseca, is a meal that I will remember forever as one of the best fine-dining experiences of my life.

