

Re-opening restaurants has been cautious in Abu Dhabi, and the UAE's capital city's gourmet residents have been equally selective in where to take their post-lockdown first meals out - and this is where the five-star hotels have come to shine.

I feel sorry for the smaller, independent restaurants and cafes, but there really is no comparison in the safety and sense of security that a spacious and professionally-run hotel outlet can offer.



Case in point the Marriott Al Forsan - the facilities are so spacious that you really do not worry about coming close to anyone. And at the entrance, an automatic high-tech scanner that only airports and top hotel chains can provide.

And then, feeling safe and comfy, it's time to feast!



Appaloosa is the Marriott's sports bar, offering fantastic weekend family breakfasts as well as fun evenings, especially when live sports events are on - and if not, with numerous continuous-feed games on, you're always guaranteed a wow! every time you raise your eyes from your drink.



And drink can be both alcoholic or not, as you prefer – because Appaloosa’s long and fully-stocked bar is run by an outstanding young Barmeister, Dmitry Mukhamadeev, who has a passion for creative and elite mixology – take my advice and ask him to surprise you!



The menu is eclectic, and presents a well-balanced selection of top bar favorites, at five-star level of taste and ingredient quality, of course; but also there are a few quirks which will certainly tickle your fancy.

Sliders are always loved, and three different styles are offered, with choice of beef, chicken, or tuna - or all!



A slab of seared tuna was an excellent way to add a seafood choice to the sliders!



And a selection of salads are also available - with a vibrant yet creamy grilled shrimp, arugula, pumpkin cubes, and the meltiest-in-your-mouth feta cheese of a quality that is rare to find!



And check out the superbly-prepared shrimp - you know that when they pop at the bite they are cooked perfectly, and then the flavors hit you!

Anybody can light some fire under a few shrimps, but to produce an epicurean delight out of a simple crustacean is not easy.



And then there is a surprising penchant for pork, and especially dishes of clear German heritage, featuring Bratwurst, and Kasekrainers, and a spectacular Bavarian Pork Knuckle, served with grandma's dumplings – well, Großmutter's Knödel, I guess! – and sauerkraut.

Oma would have approved, because it was truly splendid!



And retaining full flavor and moisture in the interior, while achieving supreme crackling on the exterior – a masterpiece of a dish!

This was so good, I would drive from any corner of UAE just to enjoy this unique meal.





As superb as the pork knuckle was, the good folk in the Appaloosa kitchens aren't quite done spoiling you, because the menu swings around to hearty portions of sausage and mash, with a fabulous onion gravy, and a generous serving of crispy fish and chips, or a classic steak sandwich with English mustard - or even a presentation of BBQ Ribs, with Kansas City or Hickory Smoke rubs...

And then you go full circle and come in to land with a smooth and decadent Classic New York Cheese Cake!



Oh, and I'd forgotten all about covid-19!

And I really needed that - to get away, to really and truly just get away from that horrible disease and all the bombardment of terrible news that has saturated us with fear these past few months!

And Appaloosa provided the ideal setting with such ease, such nonchalance, that I didn't want to leave and go back into the real world - that is the feeling you get when you visit Appaloosa on the weekend.

It's another world - a better one.



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