

And just when you thought that covid-19 had beaten us down to locked-away shadows of our former weekend brunches, it was fantastic to go back to a proper, full-on, exciting, and memorable Friday Brunch in Abu Dhabi!

So cleverly done! I was impressed not only by the whole atmosphere, and the amazing selection of foods, but especially how the good folk at the Fairmont have re-invented, and adapted, one of Abu Dhabi's favorite weekend activities into a style that smoothly mixes party-time and precautions.

Very simply: live stations behind glass.



This allowed for the full pomp of our beloved UAE-style brunches, in total splendor and live cooking especially
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for you – and it was something like 20 stations, this is the Fairmont Friday Brunch, baby! ... we're talking five-stars, pearls and high-heels!



From seafood grill, to sushi station...



Onwards to fresh pasta, and Asian noodles...





And all spread out within the spacious interior, with high ceilings and natural light, and tables distanced according to proper requirements to avoid crowding - really the most intelligent re-evolution of the weekend brunch I've been fortunate to visit in Abu Dhabi.

We've heard a lot of talk of the "new normal" - well, at the Fairmont's Friday Brunch, I felt I finally understood what it really means.

It means that our lifestyle goes on - it means we are not defeated - and that our distinctly human and most successful trait of adaptation means we can still enjoy a fabulous brunch with family and friends at the level which we are so grateful to have within our reach, and which we enjoyed before - with absolutely nothing missing!

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And I can hardly wait for the outdoors section to open up!



But I've teased you enough with the astounding presence of so many live cooking stations, replacing the traditional and outdated serve-yourself buffet – but let's zoom into the food itself, because running a large on-place catering operation is one thing, but presenting exquisite dishes that will delight the palates of Abu Dhabi's weekend epicureans are two totally different worlds...

Well, here is the first photo I posted, again – let us approach the question of food quality and deliciousness from the expression of concentration on this young Chef's face.



Professional food preparation is about logistics, and suppliers, and equipment, and all that you want to list in a scientific way; but the art of cuisine, the real heart of preparing delicious food, is in this young man's eyes.

And this is what he proudly prepared:



It was simply and totally delicious - chapeau!

It could have been prepared a la carte - and in fact, it was! That is the genius of the brunch built on live cooking stations! Even behind glass. Simply genius.

And with a small army of talented cooks, each one specializing in his or her specific dishes, the result is a compilation of dishes fit for royalty - and that is what the Fairmont Brunch was, exactly.



Fresh oysters shucked live, on the spot, just for you - "How many would you like, sir?"



Multiple carving stations - "Would you like slow-cooked brisket, smoked ribs, roast beef, or shall we just serve a tasting platter?" Don't mind if I do! And please add one of those saucy-looking Yorkshire puds on the side, thanks. A number of gravies available, too - and a selection of sides.

Oh! There's a fresh seafood live grill over there? Might try a few of those...



And whatever you do, please take my advice and make sure you find the Asian noodles station - home made. I watched the young Indonesian Chef at work, and he too was fully dedicated to making the very best dish.

I mean, you can tell right away when a cook is disinterested, on autopilot - his eyes are unfocused, he's throwing whatever estimation of quantities into a pan, he's going through the motions but he's not really there mentally.

Cooking is not an easy job to sustain over time, mind you - I understand why that often happens.

But when a Chef is in focus as I saw at the Fairmont, concentrated and "in the zone", you can see him measuring out precise quantities, and then tasting, continuously taste-checking, and making adjustments, and

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you can tell that the dish is going to be absolutely delicious just by the actions of the Chef - and the Asian noodles were precisely that.

I would say the best wok-jumped Asian noodles I have had in many years, including trips to Asia - they were exceptional.

Your choice of vegetarian, chicken, beef, or seafood - or all!





Sushi? Oh yes!

Perhaps the most simple and humble little morsel of rice, with a lonely shrimp balanced on top, just waiting to satisfy.



And more complex combinations are available as well!





And please allow me to present to you the Fairmont's take on what is probably the most popular Indian delicacy: the samosa, but elevated to five-star delicacy level!



And there was more, a lot more that I cannot hope to cover in a web article – I would need to write a book to make justice to the marvels prepared at the Fairmont Brunch.

Even the cheeses... which did not require live preparation, were cut and served for you, from behind glass – and both the selection and quality was exceptional.

Simply explained, these were the finest cheeses of the world. Period.







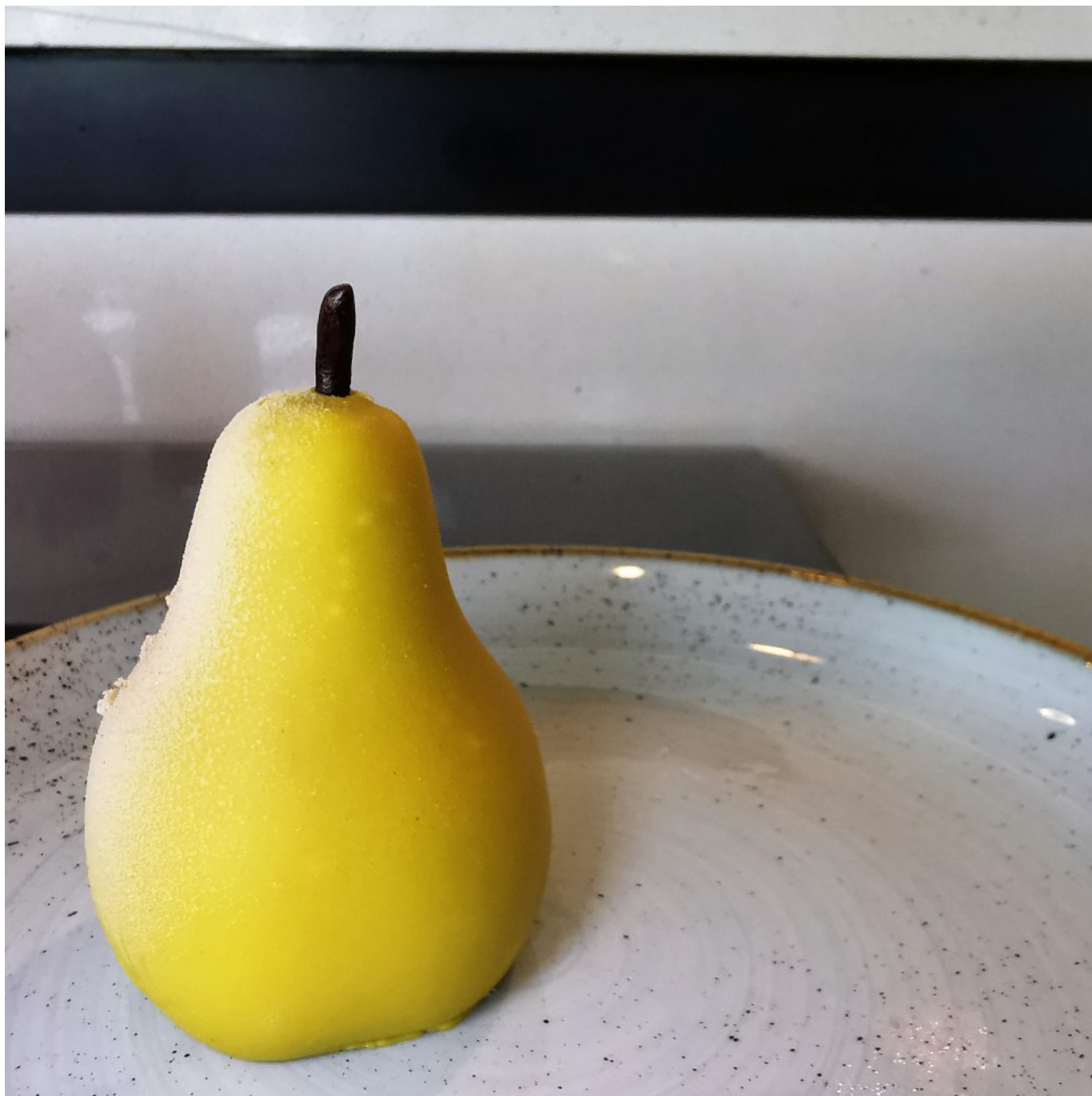
And may I mention the desserts?



The attention to detail was as excellent as the impressive variety.







By the way, that's not a pear - try it and be surprised!

Overall, the Friday Brunch at the Fairmont Bab al Bahr in Abu Dhabi has re-invented the good old brunches of pre-covid times, and amazingly not only made it the new normal, but actually exceeded expectations and improved the good old days - it seemed impossible to do. This terrible contagion has hurt so many people in many ways: health, wealth, business, employment, travel - and you know how hard the hospitality industry was hit - but as far as brunches go, the Fairmont has stepped on the virus' neck and proven that the new normal can be even better than the old normal.

I'll raise my glass to that.

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Fairmont Friday Brunch - the new normal that is better than the old normal.



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