

Chinese restaurants in UAE are hard to find at a genuine level of authenticity, and for both authentic and refined we're down to very few options - with Dai Pai Dong taking pole position in the nation's capital city.



Like descending into a movie set, Dai Pai Dong represents fine Chinese cuisine in an exquisite ambiance, and the good Chef and his team delight with always fantastic specials!

In this case, a celebration menu for the Mid Autumn Festival was on offer - and it's an occasion to look forward to once a year.

I would highly recommend you experience Chef Dong's Mid-Autumn family-style 8-course dinner, a feast served exclusively over the weekend at the beginning of October - reservations required, please.



Dai Pai Dong at the Rosewood Abu Dhabi

The outside approach from the Rosewood lobby lift is humble and understated, although you do catch a glimpse of what's ahead waiting for you.





Dai Pai Dong at the Rosewood Abu Dhabi

The actual entrance opens into a fairy tale... from a kung-fu movie scene!



But kindly allow me to focus directly on the food, because an 8-course Chinese festival is an epicurean's dream come true!

You can admire the ambiance in between bites...



The first wave are hand-crafted Dim Sum style bite-sized morsels, which are famously represented at Dai Pai Dong's weekend Yum Cha brunches - but, for the Mid-Autumn festival the ante is upped in terms of sophistication.



The choice of ingredients is elevated in all regards, and the above steamed packet of soft rice wrap is built on delicious crab meat, topped with two types of fish roe, and served elegantly on a carpet of green punctuated by ruby red pomegranate seeds – a masterpiece!

This refinement in terms of boosting traditional – and already delicious! – items to a superlative standard for the celebration proves to be the theme of the dinner, and truly it is an experience not to be missed.

You will find the popular Siu Mai dumplings topped with scallop, and the crispy rice roll matched with prawns...



...and a fabulous and genius Duck Pumpkin Puff (which was spectacular and deserves its own photo portrait!)



Happily served with its brothers and sisters...



And this was only one of the specialty courses presented on the day, as regular part of the set menu!

At the same time, the appetizers, and a traditional sweet corn soup is served to the table, which soon is covered with delights, as a proper celebratory feast should be.





The starters include very fine dishes, which marvelously complement the soup and Dim Sum baskets.



The dishes match and bounce off each other, escalating the joy of experiencing a very fortunate opportunity to participate in an authentic Chinese culinary celebration - a soft and delicate white asparagus salad complements a crispy duck salad...



And a masterfully smoked sea bass, naturally salty, is exalted by a tangy, spicy chicken appetizer.





These four appetizers alone underscore the millennial gourmet foundation of Chinese culinary arts, in which the dishes represent contradictory yet complimentary flavors, textures, and aromas - and they dance together, playfully teasing the taste buds: the crispy sweet duck bounces off the spicy tangy chicken, while a bite of creamy asparagus cuts the smokiness of the salty fish.

You are indeed experiencing haute cuisine, Chinese style - and I'll add that you are probably within the very few in the UAE to have this opportunity at Dai Pai Dong.

Oh, there was also a superlative shrimp and truffle wrap, topped with fish roe!



But the mains haven't arrived yet – don't get full too fast!



Again, a selection of dishes fit for an Emperor - the Yangzhou rice is clearly prepared at a very high level of sophistication, as the taste is rich and smooth, and like rice that I'd say you've never tasted before... unless you actually happen to be a Chinese emperor!

The Turbot fish is masterfully prepared, and the flesh is separated from the skin, and both are cooked with different techniques, and then reunited on the serving platter, combining a supreme crispiness with a deeply satisfying stir-fry.



At the same time, this is accompanied by a beef sirloin dish, and a magnificent trio of grilled meats: the world-famous Peking Duck, crispy pork belly, and the magnificent red Chinese pork, Char Gao pork neck.



The duck comes with its traditional pancakes, and the rich sweet-and-tangy sauce,



And in itself is an epic main dish!



But when accompanied by the two very different pork dishes, the party is complete!



For desserts, the menu mysteriously labeled them as ‘an assortment’, but by now we know to expect surprises!

And in fact, a selection of carefully curated treats appear.



And if that weren't special enough, there are also homemade Moon Cakes - all the better to share the good fortune of the full moon to all at your table.



A splendid way to end a meal - no, really a feast of a meal - a true celebration.

The desserts are as elaborate as the other 7 courses...



... and just plain delicious.



Overall, for a once-a-year culinary extravaganza to combine an appreciation of fine dining with an important cultural tradition tied to a festival that is celebrated all across China and by the diaspora all over the world, Dai Pai Dong participates in this event at world-class level; and fortunate indeed will be those select few diners who are able to join this feast - with the proper distancing precautions in place, tables are few, and it would be a real shame not to take the chance to be part of this truly memorable 8-course celebration.

