

I love authenticity
and good food!



And I found both, as well as a magical culinary trip to Malaysia, at a small and humble restaurant deep in downtown Abu Dhabi.

Lovely Chef Asyikin is the heart of this restaurant, and her home-cooked style food is a delight for both the palate and the soul - and the Malay community knows this already!

Specials are added daily to the blackboard, and the menu proposes Malaysian delicacies.

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As a non-Malaysian, I enjoyed the dining experience and came away with a new favorite restaurant, and an appreciation of the fantastic yet internationally under-represented Malaysian cuisine.

In fact, Malay Asian restaurant may very well serve as the unofficial culinary ambassador for Malaysian food in UAE...



As a small independently-operated restaurant, Chef Asyikin's touch is everywhere, and the place is spotlessly clean, with good procedures in place for distancing.



In the UAE's capital city, where five-star restaurant outlets are everywhere, I really respect the efforts a small restaurant puts in, especially when representing their own ethnic cuisine - it's a tough business to be in, and coronavirus sure didn't help.

Still, my appreciation depends on how delicious the food is - after all, if you open a public restaurant, you better deliver top-quality and beyond the customers' expectations.

I'm both proud and happy to share with you my best small restaurant find for 2020 so far!



Specializing in Nasi Lemak, an aromatic coconut rice dish, served in various configurations, but mainly combining the rice with a tasty Sambal, with hard-boiled egg, salted fish, crunchy peanuts, in several variations.

The Sambal, below, is a rich sauce or gravy, not necessarily spicy, but built on fresh and dried chilis, reduced over low flame to result in a wonderful smoky flavors of considerable complexity - a joy for the palate!



And the peanuts play with tiny dried and salted fish - which add a formidable flavor kick to the very smooth and gentle rice, which is prepared with coconut milk, perhaps some ginger, and even pandan leaf.



If any of my readers is Malaysian, I assure you they are already salivating and reaching for their phone to book a table at Malay Asian restaurant!

For the non-Malaysians, trust me, this is a dish that explodes with taste, and one you will remember for the rest of your life, and order at every occasion you get.

But there's more!



I chose the version with Beef Rendang, which is perhaps the best known Malaysian curry, especially after in 2017 a regional version of it was crowned as the Best Food in CNN's World's 50 Best Foods, in very top place!

Seven different Nasi Lemak are permanently on the menu at Malay Asian, and keep your eye on the specials, so you're bound to explore and maybe settle on your preferred one.

But there's more!



Delicious shakes with very interesting exotic flavors are on offer - including a Durian Milkshake which I enjoyed fully!



We also tried the mango tapioca shake - yummy!



Also, please consider that a full portion of Nasi Lemak and one of these fantastic shakes, and you're still around the 50 dirham mark!

Did I already say there's more?

Yes, a lot more...



Fishes of different types and preparation methods, all authentic...

...superb chicken satay...



... and just look at the dipping sauce!!!



That's not a commercial, watered-down version for foreigners who have no idea what it's supposed to taste like - even served out of a bottle in many restaurants who should know better - no! - at Malay Asian this was prepared with a sincere heart, just like Grandma would back in the day, with patience and due care, over hours of gentle cooking of all sorts of amazing herbs and spices - a true masterpiece!

Spectacular flavors!

And on with the other available delicacies from the menu,



And who even knows what secret dishes can appear on the magical blackboard each day!



Dear Chef Asyikin, please forgive my cheekiness, but if I were not already solidly married, and not too old and stubborn in my ways, after tasting these delicacies, I would drop to one knee and propose - and live happily ever after eating your dishes every day of the rest of my life!

And for dessert...



Overall, Malay Asian restaurant is one of the wonders of Abu Dhabi's multi-culturalism, and a highly recommended lunch or dinner place for anyone interested in exploring the authentic flavors of the Malaysian peninsula and islands - and of course for the virtual culinary tourists either craving for the flavors of home or of travel to South East Asia.

Malay Asian restaurant - fantastic in all regards.



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