

Weekend Brunch at Isola Ristorante Italiano at Jumeirah Islands Clubhouse in Dubai

After 22 years in the UAE, I have become somewhat of a brunch connoisseur - and I'm happy to declare that the Dubai Brunch is alive and well at Isola!



Two years after the pandemic shook the world's lifestyles, our adaptability is allowing us back to the activities we love, and the weekend brunch is such a stalwart of the UAE expat life social scene that it could not be vanquished.

In the olden days, it used to be the Thursday Brunch; and it was indeed one of the few expat social get-togethers we had - and they were grandiose affairs! Akin to a little weekly Royal Ascot, the ladies would wear their best dresses and fancy hats, and the gents their sportscoats...

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1910 - Countess Wedell and the Earl of Portarlington parade around a serene-looking Ascot in Photograph: PA/PA Archive

(P.S.: not Dubai... photo for illustrative, educational, and humorous purposes only... ☐)

Then around 2006 it became the Friday Brunch, as the UAE switched weekends; and now again another evolution has knocked the brunch to the Saturday.

Whatever day it is, there are four components to an excellent brunch: two are required, and the other two are optional.

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First, the dining must be exceptional, at least in terms of elegance and sophistication – no one wants to nibble on food you can get at home or at any corner restaurant! Secondly, one must arrange to meet up with a large table of family and friends – it's not your candlelit romantic dinner: this is a festive occasion!

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Thirdly, and optionally, there should be a free-flowing alcohol package, preferably unlimited. Nobody wants to be counting drinks, and you pay once at the entrance and so be it. Although controversial, the bubbles and grapes, the code used to advertise without offending, always contribute to an eventful party, even if you choose not to partake yourself - with legendary memories such as that time Uncle Joe fell into the pool, almost drowned, yet managed not to spill his glass of bubbly...

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And fourthly, also optional, but highly recommended - there should be live music. It just adds that special fun atmosphere, and brings the brunch alive.

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Well, the Saturday Brunch at Isola Ristorante Italiano exquisitely filled all criteria, and more! Though no one fell into the pool that I can recall... possibly because access is not part of the brunch.

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Actually, the brunch at Isola is overlooking the lake and the rocky waterfall section at the Jumeirah Islands Clubhouse, and falling in is not advised nor possible.

Just enjoy the unique view!

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And the whole Jumeirah Islands residential area, from the parking lot up the Clubhouse entrance, is delightful.

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And the seating on the lakefront deck benefits from shade and the open air.

But it is the whole atmosphere that is conducive to a wonderful brunch, and the staff greatly contributed, always attentive and providing to your needs.

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Isola's namesake is a clear clue as to its cuisine - Isola Ristorante Italiano!

But it does not hint at the high level of refinement in the preparation and presentation. The brunch menu is set, and the dishes arrive on automatic.



Branzino is seabass, and it was presented as Carpaccio, thinly sliced and raw, garnished with flavorsome olive oil and a myriad of capers, olives, tomatoes and other tasty morsels.

This was accompanied by an octopus salad, served on an open scallop shell,



a generous portion of Parmiggiano Reggiano and gigantic Cerignola olives, with a cheeky Arancino nestled into the side,



and a Pinsa (a hybrid pizza foccaccia, light and crunchy and normally served without cheese) for all to share.

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Paired with an old-fashioned Moretti, the Pinsa was a hit!



The mains poured in, and were delightful.

A tasty Scaloppine of veal in lemon sauce,



with sides of green beans and roasted potatoes - and a marvelous rendition of beef Agnolotti with a deep umami sauce.



For seafood lovers, a portion of seabream, in tomato sauce.

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Besides beers and the Aperol Spritz prepared at the bar on the fly, a selection of white, rosé, and red wines accompanied the meal.

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Desserts were both masterpieces - exceptional!



Profiteroles, filled with the most heavenly hazelnut creme, dipped in decadent chocolate, and nestled in whipped cream; and the cutest mignon Cannoli you can imagine!

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All in all, Isola presents a seductive brunch selection of Italian favorites, well paired with selection of beverages, and hosted at a spectacular outdoor dining deck overlooking the lake - an epic Saturday brunch for modern Dubai!

