



Weekend Dining at Amici, Ibis Mall of the Emirates in Dubai

I knew that Ibis Hotels have carved a great reputation based on affordable prices and then exceeding expectations, so I should not have been surprised when Amici restaurant presented a special limited-time menu by visiting Chef Enzo Neri - at the price of AED 89.



Normally weekenduae makes no mention of the prices, because what is expensive to one could be cheap to
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another; and so the value of a dining experience in monetary terms is normally not our focus...

...but for this occasion, the 89 dirhams is central to the story, in that I will claim that the 4-course fine-dining level of the food prepared by the acclaimed Chef is by far the best deal Dubai can offer!

Don't believe me?

Ahh, I love a good sceptic, because I am one, too!





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In fact, I was immediately suspicious, and to tell the truth, almost didn't partake - luckily I looked over the menu... and it was actually impressive...

But still, nothing compared to the mastery delivered on the evening at Amici!

First of all, lovely little dips and fresh bread, good quality olive oil on the table, and a welcome Negroni at the table upon seating.





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That was an auspicious start, but then came the first surprise - an amuse bouche, courtesy of the good Chef.



Oh! Well, that's quite impressive, and normally reserved for fine restaurants, let's say it clearly, where 89 dirhams will fetch you a bowl of soup...

And the flavors were exciting and stimulating, just like the word *amuse bouche* - translating into English as *amusement for the palate*.

Look closer:



Delicate shrimp, in a grapefruit drizzle, enhanced by savoury celery jam, and the genius crispiness of puffed rice!

I was not expecting that, with all due respect to Ibis restaurants.

So who is this Chef Enzo Neri, who comes to Amici Italian Restaurant, and quietly starts a meal by presenting a smashing Michelin-star level amuse bouche like it's a normal everyday thing to do?



Well, it turns out the Chef is a culinary virtuoso - a rebel of the kitchens, free spirit and challenging both himself and the status quo, and especially creating dishes like he were the Michelangelo of Chefs!

A graduate of the Universita' dei Saponi di Perugia, for the past twenty years Chef Enzo has worked in the culinary industry from Italy to Georgia, with lengthy detours in London, Dubai and New York and numerous other international cities.

And in Dubai with this short-term menu, for the few privileged to experience it - sorry you missed it - but a lesson for the future: when I hear of Amici putting on a special menu, or anything in Dubai mentioning "Enzo Neri", I'll be first in line!

But let's progress with the fine-dining experience at 89 dirhams...





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A magical triple-cooked octopus on chickpea puree, and a glorious interpretation of *vitello tonnato* - tender veal with tuna sauce, for starters.





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Accompanied by free-flowing drinks, all original Italian favorites - chilled Birra Moretti, and both red or white wine, as per your preference.





And while they were not paired specifically for Chef Enzo's degustation menu, as they are regularly served at Amici, it made me curious as to how good Amici must be even on a regular night *sans* super visiting Chef...

First course: tortelli di zucca - looked and tasted like fresh handmade pasta, filled with pumpkin delight, and oddly served with fragments of amaretto cookies - as well as the more traditional butter and sage.





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A lovely and surprising dish, in that sweet pasta is not normally served in Italy - although it is a beloved interpretation of Eastern European countries, and I suppose Chef Enzo was inspired by Georgian cuisine on this one - but I'm just guessing, and the flavors worked so well together!





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Following came the second course, with choice of chicken or tuna - both batting well above average!







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As we enjoyed the meal, we could not believe the level of excellence and we felt like pinching ourselves to make sure it wasn't actually a gastronomical dream!

True to form, the desserts completed a fabulous meal.







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Fully satiated, satisfied far beyond expectations - and appreciative to Ibis hotels for presenting this incredible quality dining experience, masterfully presented by Chef Enzo Neri, at Amici Italian restaurant, Ibis Mall of the Emirates: next time, do not miss it!

