

S

*The art of
reinventing*

WORDS: Lauren Hills

Walking into Rococo, Sofitel Hotel Jumeirah Beach, you are walking into a space of bold creativity. An intimate restaurant where a colour palette of plum, purple and lime green cheekily mingle with sleek tableware; the decor is just a hint of the vibrant interpretations of Italian food created by head chef Enzo Neri.

Born in Umbria, chef Neri has a love for simple, classic Italian food. And as such, the menu does hold the usual suspects of anti-pasta, pasta and pizza options, and ingredients like Buffalo mozzarella, sweet cherry tomatoes, Parma ham and beef bressaola. And while we all know and love these Italian flavours in dishes cooked to perfection, what is defining about Rococo is how the mastery of traditional Italian food is merely the base from where he adventures from.

For starters I enjoyed a plate of firm-but-juicy seared scallops, set on a bed of wilted spinach, with a drizzle of passion fruit sauce. I was intrigued to find out how this flavour combination would work, but I am happy to say that the salty, slightly-bitter spinach and the delicate seafood flavours of the scallops was elevated by the tropical sweetness of the passion fruit.

The main course was another example of Neri's inquisitive nature and flavour fusions. I ordered the rack of lamb encrusted with almonds and pistachios, which was tender and tasty. The beautiful flavours of meat and roasted nuts was accentuated by candied shallots and accompanied by mushroom croquettes.

As my first two dishes were not traditionally Italian, I decided to opt for the queen of all Italian desserts – the tiramisu. Wow. A soft, perfectly light and creamy indulgence, it matches the gorgeous tiramisu I sampled in Venice recently.

A great place for a romantic dinner for two or drinks and dinner with close friends, the menu is as diverse as it is delicious, and one that you want to explore time and again.

Always on the search for fabulous pizzas in Dubai, the Enzorizza pizza on the Rococo menu really caught my eye, as it holds some of my favourite Italian ingredients: Parma ham, aubergines, cherry tomatoes, Italian cheeses and tomato sauce. I'll definitely be making a visit back to Rococo soon! See you there.