

A feast for the eyes

Samantha Wood tries out a selection of Abu Dhabi's finest restaurants, which offer splendid views of the Arabian Gulf and city skyline



Above: Cipriani

CIPRIANI

This Italian institution is the restaurant to pick for a view of the Formula One Grand Prix racetrack from its circular terrace and window tables. Reservations for the last F1 event of the season (November 24-26) must be made well in advance – otherwise, grabbing a table is easy. The lively boat-themed restaurant perched on Yas Island's marina serves the traditional dishes Cipriani is known for worldwide – from baked tagliolini and risotto primavera to carpaccio alla Cipriani and eggplant alla Parmigiana. Save room for the vanilla meringue – and don't forget to start your meal with a Bellini aperitif made with fresh peach purée and prosecco, à la Harry's Bar.

■ Open 6pm-12am daily. Three courses Dhs 450 (£94). Yas Marina, Yas Island; tel +971 2657 5400; ciprianiyasisland.com



Above and left: Butcher and Still
Below: Sambusek

BUTCHER AND STILL

Abu Dhabi's latest steakhouse, on Al Maryah Island in the Four Seasons hotel, boasts a retractable wall that opens up to a patio and a panoramic view across the water to the glittering-by-night Corniche skyline. This 1920s Chicago-themed restaurant echoes the era of Al Capone, complete with bullet casings. The steaks and chops are all USDA natural Black Angus sustainably sourced from a Kansas farm. Try the 1.2kg Tomahawk rib eye, easily shared between two people, if not more.

A pre- or post-dinner cocktail in the buzzing bar is mandatory, if only to have the bartender knock up a martini in a human-sized "Tanqueray No 10 Imperial Martini Shaker", one of only five in the world. A lift descends two floors to a private dining room reminiscent of a speakeasy, which features a vintage whiskey collection.

■ Open daily 6pm-12am. Three courses Dhs 500 (£104). Four Seasons Abu Dhabi at Al Maryah Island; tel +971 2333 2222; butcherandstill.com

SAMBUSEK

Diners can enjoy the outdoor terrace of this popular Lebanese restaurant during Abu Dhabi's cooler months, overlooking the Al Maryah waterfront and city skyline. Located in the Rosewood hotel, it is a pristine, elegant space for a quiet lunch, but transforms itself into an upbeat restaurant frequented by Lebanese socialites in the evening. As its name



suggests (sambusek is a mini Lebanese savoury pastry), the food is traditional, with the kitchen helmed by a Lebanese chef. Aside from a business lunch menu, dinner service offers a choice of four set menus, plus the à la carte. Visit with an empty stomach.

■ 12pm-3.30pm, 7pm-12.30am daily. Three courses Dhs 270 (£56). Rosewood Abu Dhabi; tel +971 2813 5550; rosewoodhotels.com ►





Above and left: Coya

COYA

The contemporary Peruvian restaurant with two locations in London, plus another in Dubai, opened in March this year on Al Maryah Island. Whether opting for a terrace or window table, the views across the capital’s skyline are breathtaking, in particular at night. The Incan-designed dining room and separate pisco lounge with a Latino band encourages guests to take to the dancefloor – all adding to Coya’s vibrancy. The food mimics the ambience, with dishes oozing punchy flavour and playful presentation, ranging from delicious ceviches, tiraditos (raw seafood in a spicy sauce) and tacos to *anticucho* skewers and *cazuela* iron pot dishes.

■ Open daily 12.30pm-5pm, 7pm-12am. Three courses Dhs 300 (£62). The Galleria, Al Maryah Island; tel +971 2306 7000; coyarestaurant.com



CATCH

As the name implies, this restaurant overlooking Abu Dhabi’s main white sandy beach and turquoise waters is all about seafood. Mother-of-pearl inspiration embodies the UAE’s age-old diving tradition, and enhances a modern interior with a glass-encased open kitchen and a patio. Dishes are Middle Eastern with an Asian twist. Apart from typical fish and seafood dishes, the selection also includes sushi, sashimi, caviar and oysters – with plenty of meat options for carnivores, too. The jumbo crab tartare with a yellow tomato and lime dressing balances texture with flavour.



Above and above right: Catch

■ 12pm-1am daily. Three courses Dhs 320 (£67). Nation Riviera Beach Club, Abu Dhabi Corniche (opposite the St Regis); tel +971 2611 0909; catch.ae

ASIA DE CUBA

Sitting next to Catch in the same beach club is London and New York concept Asia de Cuba. The view across the Arabian Gulf may be similar, but the terrace is much more expansive with a cocktail bar, beach deck and cabanas that diners can choose to eat in. The flavours and cooking techniques developed by the Cuban-born global corporate chef marry Asian with Latino. Ceviche, small plates, salads, signature wok dishes and main courses make up an intriguing à la carte menu. View aside, the shrimp churros and Cuban chicken bao buns are worth a visit alone.

■ Open daily 6pm-12am, plus 12pm-3pm Fri-Sat. Three courses Dhs 270 (£56). Nation Riviera Beach Club; tel +971 2699 3333; asiadecuba.com/abu_dhabi

RAY’S GRILL

The 360-degree wraparound views of Abu Dhabi and the Arabian Gulf ensure this contemporary steakhouse on the 63rd floor of Jumeirah at Etihad Towers is a prime lunch and dinner bucket list venue. At night, the city’s twinkling lights make a mesmerising accompaniment to the steak cuts.

The meat is sourced from around the world – from Argentina and Australia to New Zealand, France and the US, with all cuts dry-aged for 28 days and chargrilled. On top of the steak, a top menu pick is the beef tartare prepared tableside.

■ Open 7pm-11pm daily. Three courses Dhs 400 (£83). Jumeirah at Etihad Towers; tel +971 2811 5666; jumeirah.com



Above and right: Inakaya Below left: Ray's Grill

INAKAYA

The capital’s Venetian Village, part of the sprawling Ritz-Carlton complex, mimics a charming neighbourhood with Renaissance-style buildings. Restaurants dot the courtyard, one of which is the Japanese transplant from Japan and New York, Inakaya. Its quaint terrace offers uninterrupted vistas of the canal and the rippling waters. Round the corner and you may just glimpse the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in all its glory, a stunning architectural masterpiece that rivals the Taj Mahal.

Dining at Inakaya is interactive theatre. The focus is on robatayaki – the Japanese art of grilling, which is as much about performance as it is about



cooking style – as well as sushi and sashimi rolled and sliced by the chefs mastering their knife skills.

■ Open daily 12.30pm-11pm. Three courses Dhs 260 (£54). Venetian Village, Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi Grand Canal; tel +971 2404 1921; venetianvillage.ae/inakaya

■ Samantha Wood is founder of restaurant review website foodiva.net



NEW OPENINGS

Abu Dhabi has several new and forthcoming restaurant openings, all with a view:

■ **Cho Gao** (pictured) at Intercontinental Abu Dhabi’s Marina Walk opened in the summer, serving pan-Asian cuisine from Indonesia, Japan, Vietnam and Thailand.

■ **Toro Toro**, chef Richard Sandoval’s Latin American concept (also present in Dubai) opened last month at Jumeirah at Etihad Towers.

■ This month sees two very different openings at Al Maryah Island – imported casual sushi

concept **99 Sushi Bar** and acclaimed French-Mediterranean restaurant **La Petite Maison**.

■ The first ever **Buddha Bar Beach** will open before the end of the year at the St Regis Saadiyat Island, offering pan-Asian cuisine in a beach club setting.