

Dubai deserves its place on the global culinary scene

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Foodie landscape has had an impressive evolution, characterised by diversity

Fifty years ago, when Dubai's renowned Sind Punjab Restaurant first served its tandoori chicken, few could have predicted the emirate's transformation into a global culinary hotspot.

Around this time too, Pakistani favourite Ravi's introduced its authentic flavours to Dubai, while Al Ustad Special Kabab brought Iranian kebabs, and Arabian Tea House began serving its Arabic fare, each adding distinct themes to the local food landscape.

It is traditional establishments like these that helped to lay the groundwork for Dubai's evolution into a thriving, diverse restaurant scene. As the emirate has become a major global tourism destination, its culinary offerings have matured in tandem.

The city's demographic composition is extraordinarily diverse. Expatriates comprise [roughly 85 percent of Dubai's population](#) – a key driver in attracting global restaurant brands.

The emirate welcomed its first major high-end international restaurant in 2006, when London's Japanese eatery Zuma opened in Dubai International Financial Centre.

Since then, the culinary landscape has expanded to include premium international restaurants such as Amazonico, La Petite Maison and Cipriani.

Growing with the city

The city is still expanding and new culinary hotspots are emerging, such as Atlantis The Royal, West Beach at Palm Jumeirah, and the soon-to-come J1 district.

According to local listings magazine [What's On](#), it would take “35.6 years” to dine at every restaurant in Dubai, even if one visited a different establishment for breakfast, lunch and dinner every single day.

Dubai is well placed to benefit from the global restaurant industry boom. Busy working weeks, social commitments and a desire for social status have all contributed to a cosmopolitan dining culture where people eat out an average of four to five times a week.

Food spending also makes up a vital part of the tourism dollar. In Rome, for example, tourists spend about 17 percent of their holiday funds on dining out. Food-related spending by tourists in New York City was approximately \$6 billion in 2022.

While the emirate may have a reputation for opulence, whether that’s giant croissants or gold-plated steaks, there is another side to its culinary scene.



A variety of high-quality street food can be found in the city, whether it’s a Karak Chai kiosk, a food truck next to Kite Beach, or the Time-Out food hall, they all share an easy-going atmosphere and a dedication to serving authentic flavours.

Events such as the Dubai Food Festival have attracted large numbers of tourists and residents, demonstrating a healthy appetite for foodie-related endeavours.

Local entrepreneurs including chef Izu Ani, restaurateur Natasha Sideris and many others have also played a crucial role in expanding and shaping the food scene.

Local innovation

Dubai is also coming up with its own innovative products. Salt, a female-led quick-service chain, has gained popularity for its approachable offerings. The Knafeh Chocolate bar, also known as “the Dubai chocolate bar,” has gone viral online, selling out in just minutes every day.

The culture’s deep-rooted coffee scene has given rise to stylish cafes such as The Grey and Orijins that reflect the lifestyle of locals.

Some local brands have even ventured beyond the region, with Dubai-founded Ammos Greek opening in Ibiza, Bar du Port expanding to Lebanon and Egypt, and Kinoya opening in London’s Harrods.

These examples underscore Dubai's growing prominence in the culinary world. Additionally, the introduction of the Michelin Guide in 2022 offers a new way to categorise the city's food achievements. Locally-based innovative Indian restaurant Tresind Studio has earned two Michelin stars.

In many ways the emirate offers a food spectrum that most cities cannot: a balance between the traditional and innovative, local and international, high-end and street style, extravagant and down-to-earth.



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