



Room service

Eschewing the ostentation typical of Dubai's luxe hotspots, Laurel Munshower finds Michelin-starred-chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's **JG Dining Room** to be a refreshingly refined destination where the cuisine garners all the attention

Despite numerous indulgent food trips to New York City, I've always regretted bypassing Jean-Georges Vongerichten's eponymous three-Michelin-starred flagship. So when the man himself opened up Jean-Georges Dubai several months ago, I knew it was time to remedy my oversight.

Situated in the seemingly subterranean base and terrace of the Four Seasons' external dining destination, Restaurant Pavilion (which sounds a lot more low-key than it actually is) the restaurant includes two concepts: the more casual JG Kitchen and the fine-dining JG Dining Room. Discretely occupying the same space, the former gently merges into the latter – my destination for the evening. Walking from the pretty opalescent tiles and dark, square tables of Kitchen, I'm gently transported into the plushly carpeted Dining Room where spacious round tables sporting white tablecloths are nestled into cosy grey banquettes. Lit beneath long, hand-blown glass chandeliers, it's a calm, refined and tasteful atmosphere that is not surprisingly reminiscent of a fine Midtown Manhattan eatery.

To the rear of the dining room, an open kitchen is warmly lit and helmed by diligent chefs but it's far from the focal point; they're respectful background players that allow the cuisine to remain the star of the show. The wait staff, too, while ever-present and gracious, is never

overbearing and seems to know when to materialise at just the right moment.

JG Dining Room's menu, including prix fixe, à la carte and tasting options, has taken its inspiration from the chef's flagship NYC restaurant and signature dishes. The four-course prix fixe is ideal for a well-rounded sampling without overindulging. Beginning with a diminutive buttermilk biscuit paired with a trio of flavoured butters, I'm soon savouring a tender slice of hamachi sashimi, delicately topped with toasted pecans shaved as lightly as snowflakes and turned umami by sherry vinaigrette – all while showcasing the chef's love for Eastern cuisine. An oversized bowl of charred-corn ravioli follows; it's a feast for the eyes with brilliant red tomatoes and yellow corn kernels dotting a shallow sea of bright green basil fondue. The plump, soft ravioli contrast deliciously with the crisp, sweet kernels and tangy fondue but the dish sings when red onion gets in on the action. The flavourful and fresh creation also feels healthy – a deception, once I learn about the exceptional amount of butter required to give the fondue its creamy consistency.

The savoury courses continue with two filets of veal cheek, glazed with soy and beautifully braised, the meat easily giving way to my knife. Served with subtly sweet celeriac purée, topped by a small mountain of green apple "salad" and finally crowned with a slice of jalapeño, the trio of flavours combined with the rich

quality of the cheeks give my taste buds something to think about.

Recommended by no fewer than three previous diners, I complete my meal with warm chocolate cake. The masterpiece is in fact, the result of a happy accident that occurred one day in 1987 when Vongerichten pulled a chocolate sponge cake out of the oven too soon. Once slicing into the dessert, the "oops" revealed itself as a molten delight that went on to take America's dining scene by storm. Paired with vanilla ice cream, it was a familiar – but no less enjoyable – end to an evening that excited and satisfied my long-waiting Jean-Georges curiosity.

The important bit

WHAT: JG Dining Room at Jean-Georges Dubai

WHERE: Four Seasons Resort Dubai at Jumeirah Beach, Dubai, UAE

PRICE: Four-course prix fixe menu AED540 (US\$147) per person

TEL: +971 4 343 6118

www.jean-georges-dubai.com