



TOP RIGHT FRENCH FLAIR AT BAGATELLE ABOVE BAGATELLE'S CRUDO DE SAUMON RIGHT SALADE DE BAGATELLE



o culinary world tour could be complete without a stop in the birthplace of *nouvelle cuisine* – France. Walking into Bagatelle, at the Fairmont in Dubai, you're immediately transported to Paris.

The staff (who are actually French) are dressed in Breton top and berets; Édith Piaf and Jacques Brel setting the scene in the background. The atmosphere is like the South of France itself – romantic and fun. It's easy to see why Bagatelle's French Mediterranean cuisine has made it a firm favorite on the city's foodie circuit. Start with poached prawns and the yellowfin tuna to give your palate a taste of the delights to come. And what can be more delightful than dinner flush with truffles? You have to try the pizza *à la truffe noire*, with black truffle puree and fior di latte. Follow that with the restaurant's signature dish: *poulet roti à la truffe noire*, a whole truffle-roasted chicken with foie gras, wild mushrooms, potatoes grand-mère, and sourdough bread. Vegetarians don't have to feel left out either, with a selection of dishes like homemade gnocchi with black truffle sauce and tortellini with mushroom cream sauce. After such indulgence, dessert is best shared – and the panna cotta *à la truffe blanche* will hit all your sweet spots. White truffle panna cotta, apple compote, granola, caramel jus, and Culcey ice cream conspire in a luxurious last course *full of joie de vivre*. Speaking of, after dinner, Piaf and Brel make

way for French hip hop, with staff and guests joining in on the party. If you're looking for an escape *à la française* – or maybe just a chance to dance on your chair – you don't need your passport, you just need Bagatelle. Fairmont.com

The next stop on the foodie tour is Greece. Stepping through the labyrinthine entrance of Opa – a deft Grecian touch – you'd be forgiven for thinking Sheikh Zayed Road took an unexpected detour through Mykonos. The whitewashed interiors are splashed with blue accents, with lush bougainvillea transforming this part of the Fairmont hotel into a summer taverna. Start your Greek adventure the way you mean to go on – with a selection of fresh, traditional dishes like crispy grilled pita bread liberally dragged through hummus and tarama dip, and grilled haloumi with fig and grape dressing, the sweet sauce dissolving into the sizzling cheese to create a perfect storm of texture and taste. Of course, you can't say you've eaten Greek if you didn't have lamb. The kleftiko is as melt-in-the-mouth as can be, the braised lamb practically sliding off its bed of feta mash and onto your fork. If you want something lighter, the steamed bass fillet, gently reclining on a swirl of artichoke puree, will keep you satisfied. The Greeks don't skimp on dessert either and Opa's towering deconstructed version of the much-loved baklava is like something out of Homer's *Iliad* – only a true hero can conquer it. A crispy filo cup is layered with homemade pistachio and caramel ice cream and pieces of baklava, with smashed pistachio generously scattered over a drizzle of caramel sauce. Maybe skip the pita bread next time... or opt for the lemon dessert. It sounds deceptively simple on the menu – lemon mousse with lemon sorbet – but what arrives is anything but. The delicate mousse and sorbet are encased in a white chocolate shell perfectly tempered to look exactly like a real lemon; the Trojan Horse of desserts. This being an authentic Greek restaurant, the vibe is gregarious and lively, with tables of friends getting up to join in the traditional dancing, smashing plates along the way. Don't worry, you



ABOVE RIGHT TAVERNA VIBES AT OPA ABOVE ROASTED BEETROOT AT OPA TERRACE BOTTOM LEFT TASCAS'S CHERRY GAZPACHO SOUP AT TASCAS



don't have to sacrifice your meal at the feet of Zorba – plates are provided. Opa!Fairmont.com

Travel on to Portugal at Tasca, the region's first restaurant by chef Jose Avillez, of two Michelin-star Belcanto in Lisbon. A semi-private lift takes you up to the sixth floor, where the sleek space, including a pool and cabana deck, overlooks the city skyline, complete with the Burj Khalifa. The vibe is modern and trendy, much like Portugal's popular capital. You determine your own gastronomic journey, meaning each visit is unique. Whether it be al fresco dining or a romantic tête-à-tête, the choice is yours. If you wish to be close to the action, the high tables surrounding the open kitchen, including the chef's table, allow you to enjoy a fully immersive experience with live demonstrations by the chefs and bar staff. Through his menu, which focuses on the concept of sharing – as you would in the Med – Avillez introduces classic Portuguese flavors with a contemporary and chic twist. Highlighting the country's wonderful seafood, traditional dishes to experience include *bulhão pato* clams, grilled Scarlet shrimp, and Algarve prawn ceviche for starters. For mains, opt for the *bacalhau* (salted cod), which is one of Portugal's most popular fish, along with the sardine. The *bacalhau à gomes de sá* is as authentic as it gets, while the *pica pau* pan-fried wagyu is also a must. With upbeat tunes and a cool crowd, it's easy to feel like you've been transported to a trendy restaurant in Lisboa. If Avillez's aim is to educate guests about Portuguese culture and cuisine, Tasca is a resounding success. Mandarinoriental.com □



the foodie's

You don't have to step foot outside Dubai to try a trifecta of traditional feasts from France, Greece, and Portugal

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