

MORE CAFÉ

Smart décor and staff who know their food leaves Kate Ginn wanting more

Locating itself in the coveted surroundings of the Opera Galleria, where expectations are high, could either be seen as a high-risk strategy and gamble, or the move of an insured business with an established reputation and the confidence to expect similar success in a new country.

In the case of More Café, it's the latter. A long-time favorite institution of the diversifying gourmet crowd in Dubai, where it first opened more than 10 years ago, Oman is its first foray out of the UAE, and an enthusiastic welcome was nearly always to be expected.

An award-winning call or over – it has won Dubai's Best Call several times – it still has to deliver, and Oman's gentlemen are no less a tough audience than the one across the border.

It was six weeks after its official opening when I dined and, after its transplant from Dubai, it seems to have already been accepted by its new clientele.

With its deep maroon floors, occasional stark black and white photos and exposed air vents on the ceiling, reminiscent of a New York job, it certainly seemed at home in the Opera Galleria, Royal Opera House Muscat's new flagship shopping destination.

Despite being over three-quarters full, there was a general awareness of chatter, as letting in elegant surroundings, and the tables are spaced so far apart, there's no sense of being crowded in by other diners.

There was a brief battle with my fellow best woman (one who could have the tomato soup with mushrooms, accompanied by bread, for starter. My colleague, being the best, won. I was sorry to retire. It was, she said, the best tomato soup she'd ever tasted in her life and – from the one spreaded she begrudgingly allowed me to taste – I agree. Wonderfully fruity with overtones of herbs and soft melted cheese, I could have happily eaten it for starter, main and pudding.



Info Box
Contact number: 229 22888
Address: Opera Galleria, Shatt al Qurum, Muscat.
Opening hours: 8am-Midnight
Friday Brunch 11am-4pm
Average price: (for two people) OMR2
Email: opera@morecafeoman.com

My Dutch potato salad, with apple, gherkins and beef bacon, was a more than adequate substitution. The large menu has a varied and eclectic choice, from Italian pasta to Asian-influenced dishes, such as Indian curries, and the obligatory burgers.

Then between the Moroccan chicken tagine and the Indonesian beef rendang, I went with the preferred choice of the knowledgeable waitress and opted for the second dish.

Tender braised beef with coconut and lemongrass, served with rice, occurred in a buttery bowl, was heaped on a plate, matched by the Moroccan-style salmon pie and side salad neatly deposited by my host.

A table next to us was tucking into the afternoon tea, with sandwiches, scones and hot-stout cakes served on a silver stand, which had been served without a quibble even though it wasn't strictly on the evening menu.

Spiced had been reserved for dessert but it wasn't going to be filled, so with the dark chocolate fondant I had my eye on or indeed anything else from the menu. As it's still early days in More's Oman restaurant and nothing problematic need to be worried, the kitchen was abet, explained the assistant manager. Disappointing. To be fair we were late in arriving, so it was close to the time of ringing the bell for last orders anyway. Instead, we are offered a choice from the amazing cake selection in the pasticcero, which more than makes up for it. The carrot cake was particularly good, said the assistant manager, and it would have been verily impossible to refuse.

I like to think of myself as a career cake connoisseur. Having sampled many around the

world, and this beauty from More satiated its orange-flecked light sponge into my top five with ease. Moist, weightless sponge, a perfect union of flavors and the softest, most divine icing. A chocolate wasn't so impressive.

If you're dining alone, More has a bookshelf with a selection of titles which can be loaned out to keep you company. Another lovely touch is how the restaurant allows its walls to showcase local artists, with customers able to buy the art if one takes the time.

If the Opera Galleria is too far away, don't despair. Another branch of More Café will be opening at The Wave complex this year.

Excuse the pun, but there's no doubt that your dining experience will keep you coming back for More. ■



VERDICT:

9/10

Wonderful choice surroundings and food, along with knowledgeable staff, add up to a five-star dining experience.

