



A choreographed combination of comedy cooking and culinary craftsmanship

A little light entertainment is the perfect cure for aggravation and headache, which you are almost guaranteed to get attempting to reach the Benihana restaurant. So it's good then, that this eatery offers some reprieve after negotiating the

navigational nightmare that is the Tourist Club Area of Abu Dhabi, as construction on the Al Salam Street tunnel continues.

The welcome wave of relief comes not only in the form of a variety of hot and cold Japanese refreshment, but also in the performance cooking that takes place at the teppanyaki table in the centre of the restaurant. Therefore to thoroughly enjoy this experience, it is essential to specify this area when reserving a table.

Located towards the right and rear of the Beach Rotana – arguably one

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of Abu Dhabi's finest five-star hotels – and beyond the in-house dining area next to the Brauhaus German restaurant, the Benihana's menu presents an extensive choice of sushi so you can creatively construct your starter should you wish. It also provides a number of pre-set platter options if you prefer to put your trust in the restaurant's expert chefs. The Sushi Sashimi Imperial selection is perfectly suited for two and arrives impeccably presented. It was like Neptune himself had ordered a light nautical nibble.

There are two teppanyaki areas, together seating about 35, with smaller tables scattered around them. Throughout the evening we visited, a cursory glance around revealed others at differing stages of their meal, offering a tantalising teaser of what was yet to come.

The contemporary main course menu offers a more interesting mix of culinary combinations than the traditional menu and also provides your comedian cook more chance to entertain and impress.

Each choice also comes with a small helping of Japanese soup and a house speciality salad – both of which are served before the main course. It also comes with a prawn appetiser, Hibachi vegetables, steamed rice, a desert and green tea. The soup is simple and quite delicious, but the salad was a little on the sad side and its sauce jarred with the stream of taste sensations savoured at the other stages of the meal.

Limp leaves aside, the main event began. Our chef for the evening appeared and wheeled a trolley packed full of ingredients to the large hot plate right in front of you.

What followed was a choreographed combination of comedy cooking and culinary craftsmanship as the food was chopped, mixed, tossed, fried, juggled, and generally thrown about with seemingly carefree abandon in front of you. Each chef has his own little routine that has clearly been honed over time.

After lengthy consultation with the helpful staff, the Benihana Abu Dhabi – Teryaki beef and Hibachi prawns, and the Benihana Imperial – Hibachi chicken, sirloin, prawns and hamour, were recommended, and rightly so. First to be fried were the prawns, lightly flavoured with a little lemon juice, each one melting in your mouth. Next came the strips of sirloin, each an absolute delight to digest. And so went the rest of the main course.

This portion-by-portion approach makes the meal perfect for sharing yet its departure from the usual three or four courses means a little discipline is required and the key is to pace yourself. Very quickly, what seems just enough rapidly becomes too much and the rice must be reluctantly left behind. To fully enjoy this experience, an entire evening must be set aside.

If you can manage a dessert, a small but succinct list is available. The ice cream Tempura is certainly very tasty, but the yuzo and ginger sorbet finishes the flavours off nicely.

Beach Rotana, Abu Dhabi, Tourist Club Area (02 697 9000). Open Sat-Thu 6pm-11.30pm; Fri 12.30pm-3.30pm, 6pm-11.30pm. All major credit cards accepted

The bill (for two)

1 x Large still water	Dhs20
1 x Sushi Sashimi Imperial	Dhs175
1 x Grilled hamour	Dhs116
1 x Grilled lobster tail	Dhs189
1 x Black cod fish teryaki	Dhs142
1 x Ice cream tempura	Dhs30
1 x Yuzo and ginger sorbet	Dhs30
1 x hot sake	Dhs90
Total (including service)	Dhs919

