



As the newest contender in Dubai's steakhouse league, Meydan's sleek venue packs a hefty punch

There are plenty of things that Dubai has in abundance: sand, shopping malls, skyscrapers, speed bumps... and steakhouses. At last count we ticked off at least 20 high-end venues in the city, each clamouring to stand out in a saturated market. So what can Prime Steakhouse do to make its mark?

Strolling through the empty halls of the cavernous Meydan hotel, I wondered whether this would be Prime's selling point: maybe it would transpire to be the largest steak restaurant in Dubai (in a city of superlatives, that would be some achievement). On arrival I discovered my guess wasn't too wide of the mark: Prime's two-storey-high ceiling disappears up into the heavens, while curvaceous double-height windows frame the racetrack view. The venue is decked out in opulent fabrics, with swirling motifs and gilded Rococo chairs creating a regal air.

Unfortunately, the lack of other diners during our visit meant that the grandiose setting felt barren and cold, a fact fuelled by the slightly-too-chilly A/C. Yet our maitre d' proved his worth by leading us to a cosy corner table boasting two huge wing-backed chairs. As we snuggled into the upholstery, our backs to the restaurant, I soon forgot that we were the sole diners: top marks to the interior decorator for creating an intimate setting in what would otherwise have been a draughty, cavernous space.

As the waiter presented our menus, I set about hunting for a USP. I didn't have to look far: the leather-bound pages were packed with nuggets of information. One page was dedicated to detailed steak cooking info, with 'chef's tasting notes' dotted throughout. And rather than offering standard sizes, each steak was priced per 100g, allowing diners to choose a bespoke cut (with the friendly chef again offering his advice). It felt exclusive, yet friendly.

As a prelude to the meal, our waiter glided up with a petite amuse bouche of carrot and orange soup. This delightful little cup promised great things of what was to come: inventive yet simple, its velvety consistency slipped down the throat, leaving a subtle orange tang. Our starter, by comparison, was fairly average: we'd

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opted to share a crab cake and, while dish was bursting with crab meat, it could have done with a little longer in the pan to firm up its exterior. The accompanying onion rings looked sinfully crispy, but my single bite heralded a too-tough, al-dente interior: another victim of undercooking.

The score so far: 1/1, although both of us were holding out for the main event: the steaks. My date, a wagyu

aficionado, had plumped for a 200g Australian fillet, while I'd chosen an Aussie Black Angus rib-eye. As we waited, our waiter reappeared with an armoury of steak knives, polished to a shine; after some deliberation, both of us opted for blue-handled Laguioles (the heavy-handed French blades are renowned for making short work of even the toughest meat).

To be fair, when the steaks arrived we'd probably have been able to slice them with a dull butter knife, such was their quality. My rib-eye was the epitome of the metaphorical knife through butter: it parted the instant the blade grazed its surface. I'd chosen the rib-eye for its added flavour, and the cut didn't disappoint: perfectly pink in the centre and chargrilled on the outside, each bite was bursting with carnivorous goodness.

The big test was the wagyu fillet. Fillet steaks can be a delicate balancing act: the cut is renowned for its tenderness, but the lack of fat marbling can leave it devoid of flavour. Luckily, the wagyu's silken texture didn't sacrifice any of the taste, and my date declared it one of the best steaks he'd ever eaten. High praise from a man who has been dining in high-end steakhouses for much of his adult life.

After the meat's rapturous reception, the sides had their work cut out to match up and, while they weren't bad at all, they didn't dazzle. The creamed potato with foie gras was too rich for my taste, and the spinach a little too soggy. Luckily, the slender fries saved the day: crisp, flavoursome and perfectly seasoned, they held their own

alongside the steaks, and we polished them off in record time.

And so to the final hurdle: dessert. The icing on the cake for any high-end steakhouse, Prime sealed the deal with mini portions of crème brûlée and New York cheesecake, both large enough to satisfy our sugar craving, yet small enough not to tip us over the edge from sated to stuffed. The bill, when it arrived, was another pleasant surprise: in a city that doesn't seem to bat an eyelid at charging Dhs500-plus for a cut of wagyu, Prime's prices measured up extremely well.

As I signed the bill, I mulled whether Prime has the potential to make a name for itself in the city's competitive steakhouse scene. It doesn't offer gimmicks, a seven-star setting or the backing of a big-name chef; instead its USP is first-class, perfectly prepared steaks. And, at the end of the day, surely that's what it's all about.

Open daily 7pm-11pm. *The Meydan Hotel, Nad Al Sheba, www.meydanhotels.com (04 381 3231)*

The bill (for two)

1 x Large water	Dhs30
2 x Coca Cola	Dhs40
1 x Crab cake	Dhs70
1 x Black Angus rib-eye 200g	Dhs160
1 x Wagyu fillet 200g	Dhs300
1 x Crème brûlée	Dhs15
1 x Cheesecake	Dhs15
Total (including service)	Dhs630

