

# Oriental Spice ride

Anand Raj OK suggests a nice spot for delectable Thai fare

**W**hen I think of Thailand, one of the first things that come to mind is hospitality.

I have visited the picturesque country quite a few times and have been bowled over by the cuisine and culture. So it was no surprise to find similar sentiments echoed at The Royal Buddha.

The staff were eager and friendly, and the soft-lit interiors comfortable and understated. The decor and cutlery showed touches of Far East culture, while a looming gilt-coated statue in one section of the restaurant completed the Thai look.

As soon as we had settled in our seats, we were served a complimentary plate of rice crisps and thimble-sized glasses of what tasted like very agreeable ginger ale. I sipped this while perusing the menu before ordering a Raspberry Daiquiri mocktail.

For starters, we chose *Gai Reco Nua* Satay (chicken satay) and *Hoi Cho* (deep fried chicken and crabmeat wrapped in bean curd skin). The chicken satay was a trifle dry but the crab meat rolls were out of this world.

I truly relished the seafood starter, which came in slightly larger than bite-sized rolls. Moist and perfectly done, the tender crab and chicken meat was

delightfully flavourful. I was busy tucking into the last of the rolls when the ebullient chef stopped by our table.

Pleasantries over, I asked him what the speciality of the house was. "We have an interesting menu, but tell me, what is your choice of meat?" he queried, throwing the ball back into my court. "I would like to sample duck," I said. "OK," said the chef. "I shall make a special dish. I shall stir-fry duck with ginger juliennes and some sauces."

My friend opted for wok-fried prawns with garlic sauce and wok-fried noodles with seafood. The former came with sticky jasmine rice – a Thai staple. The stir-fried strips of duck were well-coated with soy and oyster sauces and presented almost covered in a net of ginger juliennes. It was delicious.

So was the noodle dish. Served with mid-size prawns and assorted veggies, it made a scrumptious meal. "In case you want to make it spicier, you can use the chilli powder," suggested the waiter, pointing to the table-spoonful of fiery red powder lying in one corner of the plate. Of course, I didn't use it. Sometimes you must leave good alone.

However, I could not resist extending my chopsticks to nab



## PICK OF THE WEEK **THE ROYAL BUDDHA**

what Thai cuisine

where Holiday Inn, Al Barsha; 04 323 4333

why For the wok-fried prawns

cost Bill for two: Dh560 (including service charges)

one of the large wok-fried prawns and wow, it was easily one of the finest prawn dishes I've tasted in a long time. Tossed with garlic sauce, the succulent prawns were cooked to just the right doneness.

I half closed my eyes relishing the flavours of the prawn – a wrong thing to do when with friends who love seafood because when I opened my eyes, the prawns were gone! "Nice one, that dish," my friend said, dabbing the corners of his mouth with the

napkin. I agreed it was lovely, but at Dh90 a plate it seemed a tad expensive.

"Dessert sir?" asked the waiter. Yes, I said, opting for fried bananas with honey – perhaps a wrong choice because I found the bananas a bit too squishy for my liking.

But on the whole, The Royal Buddha offered us a lovely dining experience. I'd return if only to sample the prawns and the crab meat rolls again.

## THIS WEEK'S FOOD DEALS...

### SIGNATURE'S RESTAURANT

What Experience a contemporary dining venue and outstanding 21st century world cuisine flavoured with an environmental edge for Dh370 (for two).

Where Jebel Ali Golf Resort & Spa, 04 883 6000

### DINNER CRUISE

What Sail down the enchanting Dubai Creek aboard the unique Bateaux Dubai. Enjoy this cruise for only Dh325 per person, including a welcome beverage and four-course gourmet dinner.

Where Bateaux Dubai, 04 399 4994

### COUNTER CULTURE

What Take home traditional Easter hamper with some delicious goodies. Easter Hamper with Turkey available for Dh295 and with Ham for Dh545.

Where Harbour Hotel & Residence, 04 319 4000

### THE PINE GRILL

What Enjoy an amazing international buffet with carving stations the Marriott's Pine Grill. Their mains, appetizers and salads complement the irresistible selection of desserts.

Where Marriott Dubai Green Community, 04 885 2222