

MISS LILY'S

Can this New York export serving Jamaican food live up to the effervescent hype?

It's hard to miss the matte black mass of shipping containers that rest oddly on the fifth floor of the Sheraton Grand Hotel – but it's what's inside that's even more unusual. Walk through the door to Miss Lily's and you enter into rainbow of colours.

Straight out of New York City's Greenwich Village, this is the Jamaican restaurant's first venture overseas – and it's landed in the UAE loud and proud. Every inch, from the chequered floor to the striped ceiling, is a dreamcoat of colours.

While a neon deli-style sign sits above the bar (a nod to its NYC roots), elsewhere you'll find patterned curtains, reggae records and speakers precariously stacked atop each other. From the design mastermind Serge Becker, the whole space manages to look completely over the top without being tacky.

With a low ceiling across different rooms, Miss Lily's has an intimate, casual feel. The downside of having tables so tightly packed, however, is that we were left knocking elbows with our neighbours.

The menu is a modern twist on Caribbean tradition and, following the trend of hip restaurants everywhere, it encourages tapas-style dining. Without wanting to over-exaggerate, the jerk corn (Dhs38) will change the way you view skewered vegetables forever. The crunchy coconut coating was delicious and the sweet soft corn kernels were full of flavour but it was the perfect layer of spicy jerk mayo that turned this dish into superstar status.

It was a tough act to follow, but the crispy bite-size salt cod fritters (Dhs45) gave it a good go. Deep fry is a typically delicious cooking method, and the spicy curry dipping sauce finished the tasty morsels off nicely. The restaurant was staffed by friendly waiters who were as cool



as the restaurant itself and keen to give their recommendations. One such dish was the ackee hummus (Dhs42). While UAE residents see their fair share of hummus, the black topping made from Jamaica's national fruit mixed with chargrilled onion and garlic added a layer of sweetness and smokiness.

For mains, the West Indian curry vegetable noodle (Dhs105) lacked much flavour and the vegetables were few and far between among the mountain of noodles. So, perhaps unsurprisingly, a Jamaican restaurant is not a go-to vegetarian destination.

Carnivores, however, should order Miss Lily's world-famous chicken (Dhs120). Smothered in jerk marinade, the meat was so moist it fell off the bone, while the intensely sweet mango chutney balanced the kick of jerk spices. A crispy chargrilled coating is all it needed to

have us smacking our lips for more. Don't underestimate the sides either. Cooked in coconut milk, the rice and peas (Dhs38) was buttery and comforting.

The whole menu is all about the winning combo of spicy heat and sugary sweetness, and we finished on a real sugar hit, sharing the baked Jamaica (Dhs62), a Caribbean twist on the '80s classic.

By the end, the bar was packed, benches were lined with people and we were left struggling to find the exit. Will we be back? Absolutely. Next time we'll stick to the smaller plates – and maybe order an extra jerk corn just for us.

a *Sheraton Grand Hotel Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, daily 7pm to 2am. Tel: (04) 3544074. Metro: World Trade Centre. facebook.com/misslilysdx*

RATING

Food.....	B
Atmosphere.....	🍷 🍷
Price.....	🍷 🍷