

# SUPPER

HOTEL FOOD & DRINK



MANDARIN ORIENTAL JUMEIRA – DUBAI • NUNO MENDES • THE STANDARD – LONDON

# Mandarin Oriental Jumeira

DUBAI

A strong F&B programme lies at the heart of Mandarin Oriental's eagerly anticipated debut in the Middle East.

Words: Devina Divecha • Photography: © Silverfox Studios / Nacasa & Partners Inc.

While it's not uncommon to see multiple hotels debut in Dubai every year, it's rare to witness a property opening up on the natural beachfront of the city – simply because the available spots are already taken. For its Middle Eastern debut, Mandarin Oriental snagged a prime location on the highly coveted Jumeirah Beach Road; designed by Jeffrey Wilkes, the property features spacious and elegant guestrooms, most with private balconies and terraces, offering views of the Arabian Gulf or the city skyline. The arrival experience is particularly memorable, framed by a canopy of 14 bronze metal trees that line the hotel's lobby, all the way to the oceanfront.

Mandarin Oriental Jumeira's dynamic F&B programme has been created by interior architectural design business Silverfox Studios, and a host of top companies are supplying this landmark project, including Siom Orfevres and Studio 1765. Indeed, the hotel boasts a dazzling array of restaurants and bars, each with their own standout elements – an essential consideration in a city where venues open and close with alarming regularity.

On the ground floor, just off to the left of the lobby, is Netsu, a Warayaki-style Japanese steakhouse. Warayaki involves finishing grilled foods in flames from a straw stack, rather than

charcoal, and Netsu is the first of its kind in Dubai. The restaurant is helmed by Australian-born Ross Shonhan, formerly Head Chef at Zuma and Nobu Dallas.

The brief given to Silverfox Studios for this ambitious steakhouse featured a robotayaki grill, sushi bar and lounge with standalone bar and cocktail facility. "The architect's drawings showed a dramatic double-height volume, from which we discussed a split-level theatre concept," recalls Patrick Waring, Partner at Silverfox Studios. The Japanese traditional kabuki theatre was the inspiration behind the rest of the concept creation and planning; Waring adds: "The front-of-house kitchen location, size and circulation pathways reflect this kabuki design philosophy, which places the stage in the centre of the room, away from the main back-of-house kitchen."

Moreover, the carefully curated beverage offering continues this focus on celebrating one of Asia's most distinctive cultures. F&B Director Ben Ackhurst says: "Netsu offers the opportunity to discover the stories behind Japan's finest sake varieties with a dedicated sake sommelier, Sourav Dutta, taking guests on a journey through Japan, while uncovering distinct notes, flavours and pairings during their dining experience."





Australian-born chef Ross Shonhan is behind Warayaki-style Japanese steakhouse Netsu

The second signature restaurant is Portuguese concept Tasca, located on the sixth floor. Tasca is the creation of José Avillez, who is also behind double-Michelin-starred Belcanto in Lisbon, and this outpost represents his 18<sup>th</sup> site in total. Avillez was in attendance for the official opening party, and emphasised his desire to deliver an authentic Portuguese experience to the city. In line with his ethos of providing authenticity, the name of the outlet relates to small family-run eateries, where drinks and small plates are served from a bar area or kitchen. "Our brief was to maintain the unique qualities associated with the origins of the tasca culture, embracing the casual, friendly nature of these family eateries, while adding this outlet as a chic, sophisticated and edgy component to the hotel's F&B mix," says Susan Heng, Partner of Silverfox Studios. Space constraints have directly influenced the design – with an open kitchen on an island sharing the same space as the cocktail and mixology stations. Meanwhile, seating has been placed around the island, forming part of the overall experience, in which chef and guest interaction is key.

The dishes showcase modern takes on Portuguese classics from both the sea and the land, such as giant red shrimp, bacalhau à Gomes de Sá, piri piri chicken with smoked avocado cream, and a surf-and-turf platter with blue Portuguese lobster. Complementing the culinary offering is an extensive wine list. "From port and vinho verde to Mateus rosé and Douro reds, Tasca offers the largest selection of Portuguese wines in the UAE," says Ackhurst. Further bolstering its credentials in this regard is the presence of Head Sommelier Nuno Oliveira, a real connoisseur with an extensive knowledge of Portuguese vineyards and wineries.

Other concepts at the hotel include The Bay, a brasserie-style ground-floor restaurant with show kitchens and family-friendly menus. The Bay's brief called for several components to be included into the three-meal concept, and Silverfox introduced zoning between different sections of the restaurant with its clever use of space. From tall greenhouse garden trellises and ceiling details through to sliding folding



screens, a number of design elements have been woven in, allowing for both flexibility of operation and variety in F&B offering.

Located in the lobby under the metal trees, meanwhile, the Noor Lounge offers guests hot drinks and light refreshments with a focus on the 'Tea Voyage' afternoon-tea experience, courtesy of Executive Pastry Chef Gregory Christant. Elsewhere, The Mandarin Cake Shop provides a selection of delectable treats, not least authentic Arabic sweets in a nod to the wider region. And situated in the heart of the resort, the Sun Vibe Pool Bar serves refreshing, handcrafted cocktails alongside an extensive range of poolside dishes, including healthy bites and classic favourites.

Also worthy of note is Beluga by Gourmet House Caviar, which lends an extra touch of luxury to the hotel with its dishes prepared using ingredients by sturgeon breeders boasting 50 years' expertise. The menu has a selection of sturgeon caviar including Huso, Acipenser Baeril, Russian Oscietra and Servuga and, in

homage to the City of Gold, one of its signature dishes features 24-karat Gold Almas caviar topped with 24-karat gold flakes.

Another exclusive element is the Club Lounge, which is accessible to guests staying in the hotel's Club Rooms and Suites – also designed by Silverfox Studios. The hotel viewed this area as a residence when providing the design brief, wanting guests to enjoy the facilities as if they were an extension to their rooms. From small private lounge work pods to a walk-in kitchen and table, as well as a breakout room, there are multiple elements within the lounge that provide a sense of belonging and casual exclusivity to users.

There is plenty of F&B competition in Dubai, particularly along Jumeirah Beach Road where the hotel is located. But with signature restaurants looking to provide a touch of authenticity not seen elsewhere in the city, and luxury options for elite travellers passing through, Mandarin Oriental Jumeira's F&B programme is truly one to watch.



#### IN A BITE

Operator: Mandarin Oriental  
 Interior Design: Silverfox Studios  
 Signature Chef: Ross Shonhan (Netsu),  
 José Avillez (Tasca)  
 Executive Pastry Chef:  
 Gregory Christant  
 F&B Director: Ben Ackhurst  
 Serveware and Catering Equipment:  
 Siom Orlevres  
 Wine Coolers: Studio 1765  
[www.mandarinoriental.com](http://www.mandarinoriental.com)