



Where to eat, Arabian-style

Like the city itself, Dubai's menus have borrowed heavily from a melting pot of cultures to create a cuisine that's been fully adopted by the Emirati local and expats alike. Taking the best bits from Levantine (flatbreads and meze) and Moroccan (tagines and meat stews) cooking, with local twists added in such as camel milk and saffron threads, an Emirati meal is real soul food, designed to comfort and satisfy travellers.

Breakfast in Dubai | Qwaider Al Nabulsi

Start your morning the way hundreds of local commuters do with a visit to Qwaider Al Nabulsi diner for a *kunafa*, the Emirati version of a cheese danish. Topped with crispy shredded pastry, melted cheese oozes out from a sweetened egg-glazed roll for a finger-licking favourite of school children, labourers and white-collar workers alike. Pair with the ubiquitous iced lemon-mint drink, perfect for both cutting through the sugary breakfast roll and quenching early-morning thirst.

Meylas Food Truck | Instagrammable Eats

Feeling hungry for up-and-coming Emirati chefs? Hunt down the Meylas food truck (locations listed on instagram @meylas), featuring next-gen foodies prepping the traditional recipes handed down by their mothers and grandmother. You'll want to go back for seconds of the *rgaag* sandwiches, made with paper-thin crispy Arabic bread, but save room for the *batheetha*, a filling dessert made with date paste and ghee, and the moreish sticky *legimat* fried dumplings.

Sharwama | Secret local dining at Al Mamzar, Deira

The one dish that best represents Emirati food? Look no further than the humble *shawarma*. A one-handed meal, this wrap usually includes slices of beef or chicken straight off the spit, pickled vegetables, tabbouleh salad and a combination of tahini, hommus and *amba* spreads, all rolled up in fluffy Arabic bread. For a tried-and-tested favourite, head to the corniche at Al Mamzar, and duck into the little nameless café opposite the corniche park. Here you can pick up an authentic

shawarma (or three!) for about five dirhams each. Keep your eyes peeled for the pet tortoise lazing outside, and you've found the spot.

Zaroob | Break (flat)bread in Dubai's hip art district

An afternoon craving could see you breaking bread with the achingly hip and arty crowd at Zaroob. Specialising in *man'oushe* (the collective for flatbread bakes and wraps) and open 24 hours, the Emirati owned eatery aims to recapture the Levant era with their huge menu of fresh meze and grills. Inside is brightened up by street-inspired artwork, while the long outdoors terrace is popular with locals looking to catch some sunlight. Be warned – servings are super-sized, although it's a welcome common practice for leftovers to be automatically wrapped up to take away.

Deira's traditional tent rooms | family-style feasts

Dining with a large group? Pull up a cushion and share your meal family-style and minus Western cutlery in one of Deira's traditional tent rooms. Al Tawaso (near the clock tower, Abu Baker Siddiq Street, Al Rigga; +971 4 295 9797) is a consistent favourite with both Emiratis and visiting Gulf nationals craving a smorgasbord of tummy-filling dishes like *shorbat adas* (lentil soup), chicken *machboos* (chicken cooked with rice in a blend of roasted spices or *besar*) and *laban* (thickened drinking yoghurt). There's even a half-sheep dish for the extra-peckish.

End your meal with a few pulls from the shisha water pipe and a cup of cardamon-scented coffee, made from green beans, and drunk strong and sweetened with a few drops of sugar syrup. The *qahwa* blend from Bateel < bateel.com > rings true to the nomadic tribe's version, and is even better when paired with the cafe's succulent stuffed *khidri* dates.

Desserts in Deira | Emirati Pastries

Those wanting something a little sweeter will find it worth venturing back to Al Muraqqabat Street and filling a box of cookies and pastries to go at Al Samadi Sweets. Here, customers can pick from stacked pyramids and shelves of sweet treats, with Emirati families often dropping by to order in bulk to keep at hand for unexpected guests. Try the *ma'amoul* (spiced date cookie) and *bukaj* (the cashew nut-stuffed baklava pouch), both favourites to cap off celebratory feasts.