

Al Mourjan



Eating Out

Cooling weather means there's no better time to try the Lebanese eats on the Corniche

It's hard to miss Al Mourjan. As the only restaurant on the Corniche, it would stand out even without being located under the Oryx statue and covered in twinkle lights. Walking towards the entrance, you're smacked in the face with a view that refuses to be ignored: the outdoor eating area juts out into the water, with a series of steps that at high tide are almost under the sea, putting the water right at your toes while you eat. With those postcard-perfect views of West Bay and the Corniche, it's the stereotypical must-see for visitors to Doha, particularly in winter if they're used to snowy gusts and Al Mourjan is offering up soft ocean breezes.

We opt to sit on the patio, which is relaxed and the perfect foil to the communal and casual feeling of mezze. Inside, it's all slightly overdone leather chairs, starched linen and way too many forks: outside, it's paper napkins, wicker chairs, and the feeling that you can reach to steal a bite from one of the bowls without knocking over assorted stemware.

There are loads of Lebanese restaurants in Doha, and Al Mourjan comes in as one of the pricier options, which initially has my dining companion balking. That much for houmous? The menu is fairly

extensive, with a range of hot and cold mezze, Middle Eastern grill items and seafood. We actually find the 'International Fare' on the menu slightly off-putting – would I really want mozzarella sticks with my tajine? As it turns out, yes I would: we order a range of mezze to start, including the mozzarella sticks. They arrive quickly, covering our table with small bowls. I'm glad that this isn't my first go-round with Lebanese food: the menu itself doesn't do a whole lot in the way of explaining what exactly each dish is, instead just giving the Arabic name and moving on. The staff try to answer our questions, however the language barrier kicks in and we're left wondering exactly what we'll be putting in our mouths when the food arrives.

But when it does, the confusion seems to have paid off – the food is excellent and surprisingly filling. We try the tajine, which has a light sesame flavour, the mohammarah, which is spicy without burning our lips with a tasty pepper and tomato flavour, and of course the houmous. I've never met a chickpea I didn't like, but this is legitimately some of the best houmous in the city. It's like the platonic ideal of a chickpea, the form of houmous if you will. We also try

the batata harrah (spicy potatoes), which are exactly as they sound: light, spiced potatoes that complement some of the more intense mezze flavours. And, just for fun, we try the spring rolls and mozzarella sticks, two of the more unexpected menu items for such a traditional Lebanese place. The spring rolls are crisp and fat, and the mozzarella sticks served with a delicious dipping sauce.

We gamely make our way through the food, and are thwarted by the filling nature of mezze. But we soldier on, deciding on the mixed grill for mains. We ask our server what exactly is on the mixed grill: torn between trying their chicken and the lamb chops that have reached fabled status among our meat-loving friends, we're hoping to get both. Our waitress assures us that yes, we'll have all that and more, so we jump at the chance.

It arrives before we're done with the mezze, and we squeeze the many platters and bowls onto the table. The meat is buried under a mound of salad, French fries and tomato bread, and once we've unearthed it, there are generous portions of chicken, kofta, and lamb skewers, but no chops! Upon asking another server, it's revealed we've been bamboozled by language barriers again. Slightly disappointed, we tuck in: the meat is tender and delicious, with just the right amount of flavouring. The real star, however, doesn't even come on the plate – it's



the small bowl of garlic sauce that really lights up the dish.

Al Mourjan is a solid choice for some of the nicest Lebanese food in the city – and the view can't be beat. However, it might be wise, the first time at least, to take an Arabic friend with, just to translate the menu. *Al Mourjan, the Corniche (4483 4423). Open Sat-Wed 12.30pm-12.30am, Thu-Fri 12.30pm-1am. All major credit cards accepted. Unlicensed*

The bill (for two)

1 x houmous	QR25
1 x tajine	QR30
1 x mohammarah	QR30
1 x mozzarella sticks	QR45
1 X batata harrah	QR25
1 x spring rolls	QR35
1 x mixed grill	QR110
1 x large water	QR20
Total (incl charges)	QR320