

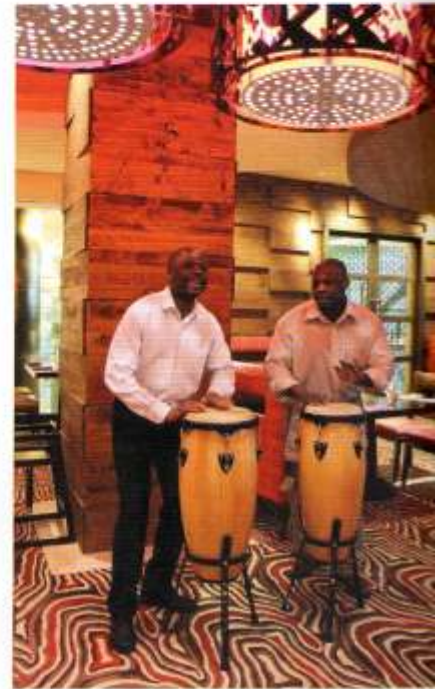
THE MEAT CO.

By Meghan I

Stakes you'll leave home for



Charles Sibanda & Ahmed Asran



My friends and I have long lamented that there is no real dining experience in Kuwait as you would find in Europe or the US. There, you would probably have dinner and drinks with friends before moving on to a show or a club. Often, you chat with people around you. Patrons tend not to stare at each other, but smile and admire. You can feel it in the air; there is anticipation of good times ahead as you socialize over great food, great ambiance, great service, and hopefully served by people who are friendly and might even remember you. In Kuwait, a single "sirnaam," problem with your order, or service indiscretion snaps you back to reality in an instant; the magic of the evening morphs to the realization that regardless of what new restaurant someone has opened; it is the same old, same old.

And then, there are exceptions. I was pleasantly surprised by The Meat Co. housed in the 360 Mall. Don't let their location fool you; the retail location is not indicative of the type of evening guests will have in store. You might be anywhere at this trendy new

restaurant; it feels like Miami or New York or London. Patrons dress for the occasion and their class and taste is reflected in their demeanor. We were lost in the ambiance; transported out of the mall (albeit a very pretty mall) to another place.

The restaurant was designed by someone who has taken the time to incorporate all the aspects of the latest styles in color, texture, and lighting. It is an artistic combination of wood, leather, marble, and stone work combined with autumn colors of deep oranges and rich reds. Light international music of the Buddha Bar genre plays in the background. The seats have not been designed to turn tables; they are welcoming and comfortable; the type of seating that lures you to stay and savor an enjoyable meal.

Steak and seafood houses cannot feel claustrophobic; and the Meat Co. has designed their venue to both limit noise and allow customers a large, open space to relax. The restaurant seats 220 guests; their private room can seat approximately 16. Even with accommodations for high occupancy, management tells

us that the restaurant is at full capacity most weeks sometimes with waiting times of 30-45 minutes.

I would wait to get into the Meat Co.; first and foremost, because I would follow my favorite Desmond, anywhere. He provides the type of service that a picky restaurant patron rarely finds. Regardless of who you are or how bad Desmond's day has been, you are instantly his best friend. Desmond remembers your last order even if you have been a customer for months. I am not Desmond's only follower; our conversations of neighboring tables express the same sentiments. However, the type of service Desmond provides is not solely reserved for him at The Meat Co. His colleagues and managers are of the same nature. We made fast friends in a few hours time. When Desmond is happy, customers are most likely happy. The passion that the Meat Co. team exudes translates into the quality of outstanding meals.

The Meat Co. is a South African restaurant. Their food is imported from Australia and their fish is all fresh. Many of the servers, like Desmond, are from South



they are happy to point out their favorites on the menu including several traditional South African dishes like 'Boerewors', an appetizer of African sausage, served with polenta and chakalaka sauce; and traditional South African Malva Pudding for desert, an apricot pudding thickened in caramel sauce.

We started the meal with the Red Chili Prawns; succulent Gulf prawns pan-fried with garlic, ginger, chilli, lemongrass and cream" (which is a must-followed by the Rocket, Apple and Walnut Salad, topped with rocket leaves, drizzled with balsamic dressing, topped with shavings of aged parmesan, sliced apple and spiced walnuts." We had fruit cocktails (Caribbean Wild Berry) with our meals that were light and refreshing; not overdone with syrupy sweeteners. Only when it was time to get serious: Steak. The Meat Co.'s secret weapon is their house basting; a recipe that is said to have been created 40 years ago with as many as 40 ingredients. It is an outstanding slightly-sweet and spicy compliment to steaks that could be cut with a spoon. I had a fillet cooked perfectly at medium-rare

and my Kuwaiti companion ordered a t-bone well-done (which I firmly believe to be an atrocity). However, even at well-done, the steak was surprisingly tender. We ate to the point of discomfort; it was just that good.

The Meat Co. offers a variety of sauces to compliment both their steaks and hamburgers. (The two young Kuwaiti men seated at the table in front of us gave their hamburgers 2-thumbs-up, followed by "amazing.") The steak specialties include "Gold" fillets which come from cattle fed grain for 250 days prior to their earthly departure, and a 200-gram Australian Wagyu fillet, marbled scored at 4-5 (which is the highest quality available). The menu doesn't stop at beef; there is a large variety of seafood, chicken, and lamb, many side dishes and a few pasta and vegetarian dishes. The restaurant would make an outstanding venue for a business lunch. They offer several light meals like the Smoked Salmon Salad, Char-Grilled Chicken Breast, and London Battered Fish (fish and chips) which can be followed by either a fresh fruit plate or the Meat Co.'s Dessert Tasting Platter that can be shared.

Following our meal, we were given the distinct honor of a traditional African song by the servers, played on drums and sung by a gentleman with an amazing voice. It was the perfect ending to an absolutely perfect dining experience. I smiled all the way home.

Expect to pay a little more at The Meat Co. but what you pay for is reflected in the quality, service, and caliber of patrons you will dine with. If you are one who prefers not to walk through a mall to get to this fabulous restaurant: park on the upstairs level of the parking structure, and continue around as far as you can go to the left. Marks & Spencer will be on your right as you walk in.

The Meat Co. is located on the 2nd level in 360 Mall of Kuwait. For more information or to make a reservation please call: 2530 2530 or log onto their website: www.themeatco.com.