

The sky's the limit

A look at Dubai's most iconic architecture

Food for thought

Restaurant design is big business

Party planning

Top tips on how to host a soirée in style



Location

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Celebrate!

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Smell, atmosphere, food seating arrangements? Before any of that it's the interiors, and restaurant managers and owners are now investing more time and money on them than ever before.

From the grand designs of some of the luminaries of the fashion world to simple, minimalist approaches, there is a plethora of eating interior styles to choose from and each has its own merits.

The design of public eating environments has become something of a science as designers seek to create an atmosphere and space that makes you feel comfortable, but equally accentuates your overall dining experience.

These were just a couple of the important factors for interior designer Jorge Castillo when designing the latest Meat Co restaurant, which will open at Downtown Burj Dubai. The second outlet to open in the city, the Meat Co has built-up a reputation in recent years as one of the best steakhouses in the city.

The original restaurant at the Souk Madinat is a favourite with residents and visitors, and has won several awards for its fresh approach to the traditions of a good steakhouse.

One of the first challenges for Jorge and his team was how to create an individual feel for this restaurant in the shadow of the world's largest tower, but also in the shadow of diners' opinions of the existing restaurant.

"We wanted a contemporary take on the recognised steakhouse design by articulating some of the traditional finishes with an

African twist," Castillo explains.

One way of doing that and accentuating the African roots of the restaurant was by relying on authentic materials and products. "All the materials we used were natural and traditional, and we used them in a unique and unexpected manner," Castillo continues. "I like to think of this restaurant as a playful contrast of materials, textures and finishes. We have used stone, wood and metal

finishes, along with vibrant art on the walls, all of which are literally woven into one another."

It is a space of contrasts, of rough and smooth finishes, neutral and strong colours – much like the food they are serving. The red meat, for which the restaurant is renowned, is complemented by the colours and contrasts of the interiors. It's a style that Castillo was keen to achieve.

"There are custom-rubbed plaster-finish wraps around the walls, all set against the large wine glass display cases that create the transition between the outside and inside."

The open-plan kitchen is a hive of activity and aromas to entice and entertain the diner at any opportunity. With so many influences, how does Castillo sum up his design of this space?

"I think the restaurant has a definite masculine feel, but with a feminine touch provided, in part, by the patterned fabrics and custom-made light fixtures. I think the art infuses the space with that touch of African magic, as do the traditional wood carvings."

And his favourite feature? "The large mural of an abstracted view of the African plains that flanks the casual dining area."

Castillo seems to have been successful yet again with Meat Co Burj Dubai. The owners certainly think so, because they have commissioned him to design Meat Co Abu Dhabi, which opens for business in July this year.



Above: The Meat Co designer, Jorge Castillo
Left: The restaurant's custom-made light fittings

FASTFACTS	
Name	The Meat Co
Location	Souk Al Bahar, Downtown Burj Dubai
Food	Steakhouse
Design theme	Lavish, eclectic, contemporary
Design features	Custom-made light fittings, mosaic work, beadwork, polished wooden flooring, leather
Seating	Indoor or alfresco terrace with views of Burj Dubai
Kitchen	Open plan
Contact	+971 4 420 0737 or go to www.meatco.ae

Below: Castillo has mixed masculine and feminine touches to great effect



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LOOKING FOR SOMEWHERE TO CELEBRATE?
TOM URQUHART INVESTIGATES HOW
RESTAURANT INTERIORS CAN CONTRIBUTE
TO YOUR OVERALL EATING EXPERIENCE

WORDS Tom Urquhart IMAGES Bahr Karim



Above and below
The challenge with designing a top restaurant is to create the perfect atmosphere for diners.

