



From top: Colourful art on the walls at LPM; a dessert platter at Roka; Meraki's lush patio



The New Culinary Capital

With buzzy new satellites of global restaurant heavyweights alongside creative homegrown concepts, Riyadh is emerging as a dining destination to watch

Miami, London, Hong Kong, Riyadh: **LPM** (lpmrestaurants.com) hopscotched across continents to bring a taste of the French Riviera to the Mandarin Oriental Al Faisaliah. In a Belle Époque dining room enlivened with splashy Pop Art paintings, diners tuck in to ratatouille, yellowtail carpaccio and other staples from LPM menus worldwide. A few steps away, the Greek favourite **Meraki** (meraki-restaurant.com) makes its way to Riyadh via London and Sardinia. Executive chef Athinagoras Kostakos – who previously won the Greek edition of *Top Chef* – brings his modern riffs on Hellenic flavours to the capital after a long stint in Mykonos. Restaurateur Rainer Becker, who transplanted his Japanese robata-yaki concept **Roka** (rokarestaurant.com) from London to Dubai last year, opens a Riyadh outpost this summer in a sprawling space adorned with rice paper walls and antique accents. Pass through a sculpture garden and into **Billionaire** (billionairesociety.com), a lavish lair with sultry lighting, gilt trimmings and vivid pops of scarlet and emerald. A recent addition to Riyadh by way of Porto Cervo and Dubai, the theatrical space sets the stage for a decadent Italian-Asian

menu: Wagyu beef gyoza, risotto with black truffle, king crab tacos and more (expect to eat like a, well, you know). As the name suggests, there are options aplenty at **Plenty** (plentyofthings.com), a new concept space with boutiques, salons and eight restaurants, where you can graze on everything from sushi at Goka Sakana to red velvet soft serve at Linen. And you'll find an eclectic mix of things to see, do and eat at the Boulevard complex: Browse housewares from Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Adler, Sena Gu and Skultuna at the quirky design emporium Sum + Things, then make your way to **Bazaru** (bazaru-ksa.com) to try chef Hendry Shiro's sophisticated spin on Japanese street food. **ENT**



WORDS: SARAH KHAN; ALICE HOLTHAM

LA DOLCE VITO

Part-gourmet Italian osteria, part-vibrant lounge bar, Chic Nonna is one of Dubai's most anticipated restaurants ahead of its August debut. In the kitchen, acclaimed chef Vito Mollica takes the reins



What inspired you to become a chef? I come from a village called Avigliano, in the south of Italy. As the youngest son of four, I would admire my mother as she cooked specialities from my land: she has been my true inspiration.

Tell us about your culinary style. I make traditional cuisine with a refined twist. Italian food is one of the world's most beloved cuisines, and its secret lies in its local, seasonal ingredients. When each element is perfectly balanced not only on the plate, but across an entire meal, the dining experience is lifted above and beyond.

Why are you excited about opening restaurant in Dubai? Experiences overseas shape you as a person and as a chef, so I feel blessed to be part of such an amazing project in one of the world's most prominent and influential cities. On my first visit, I was particularly impressed by Dubai's exciting dining scene and exceptional levels of service.

And what will Chic Nonna add to Dubai's restaurant scene? My beloved Tuscany, a princely region worldwide when it comes to gastronomy, will certainly be an inspiration. Managing director Piero Giglio is a pioneer of Italian fine dining in Dubai, and together we are bringing a moving, authentic and immersive Italian experience. chicnonna.com **ENT**