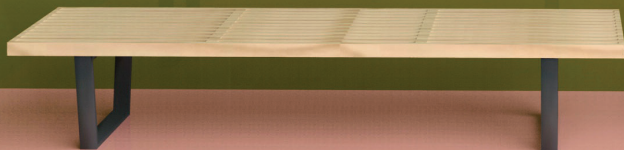


WORD OF MOUTH

Designs on Beirut



Even amid a seemingly endless onslaught of tragedies, Beirut's creative spirit endures. Case in point: Exil Collective, the brainchild of product designer Tatiana Akl, which made its foray into the world stage with a splashy debut at last month's Dubai Design Week. For this new design incubator, Akl has rallied 20 talented independent creatives – from emerging artisans to design-world mavens like Nada Debs – to forge a platform that fosters experimentation and innovation. Shop for spherical lighting by Laetitia Jbeily, a whimsical incense holder by Paola Sakr, quartz paperweights by Rania Abillama and more to discover how cutting-edge Lebanese craftsmanship is thriving against the odds. exilcollective.com



New Chef on the Block

After the US, Canada, Belgium and India – where he was a Bollywood favourite – Kelvin Cheung sets his eye on Dubai

– but Dubai seemed like the best place for the present and for the future. What the government has done through the pandemic, and set up for the country for the future, is absolutely astounding. They've created the most forward-thinking, safest place in the world, and there's a reason every big-time chef is coming here right now. This is the place of the future.

So what's on the menu at the new restaurant?

Asian flavours, reimagined: a contemporary Asian restaurant grown in Dubai and inspired by Hong Kong, India and Canada. I'll be using wood and charcoal to layer in fun, intense flavours that I grew up eating as a child as well as on my travels throughout Asia. I'm also adding a lot of flavours and dishes that I ate, grew to love and learned to cook while I was in India, and putting some fun twists on it. Downtown is where all the big boys are, and I'm trying to serve the best food, the best

experience, without that same dent in your pocket. I want it to be your go-to spot: the place you think of whenever you're hungry, whenever you want a drink, whenever you have a date night, whenever you want to celebrate. This should be your home kitchen, everyone's neighbourhood spot – whether you live downtown, Emirates Hills, Jumeirah...

You've been documenting your adventures in local dining with #kelvineatsUAE. What have been some of your favourites so far?

One of the best meals I've had in a long time was at Hashmi Barbeque, a legendary Nairobi brand that's recently transplanted to Dubai. It's a no-frills, simple place that serves banging fried chicken and one of the best tandoori chickens I have ever had. The paper sada dosa at Saarangaa Bhojan Shala is light, thin, crispy and massive and takes me straight back to Dakshinayan in Juhu, Mumbai. [@chefkelvincheung](https://www.instagram.com/chefkelvincheung)

Though he comes with a global restaurant pedigree, courtesy stints all over the world, many have gotten to know chef Kelvin Cheung online, where he shares light-hearted posts of his travels, kitchen experiments and beautiful family. Now, with a restaurant opening in Downtown Dubai in early 2022, UAE diners will savour the Instagram-savvy chef's culinary creations first-hand.

What drew you to Dubai?

I was fielding offers from Nepal, London, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Miami, San Francisco