

WINTER 2023/24

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PLUS:

WORLDLY GOODS
READY FOR TAKE-OFF
CORINTHIA'S COUP
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DUBAI BY THE FORKFUL

SOUL FOOD
Chef Kelvin Cheung
(pictured, right) is
the brains behind
fusion brasserie Jun's



Already a well-established culinary cauldron, the glittering emirate is upping its gourmet game with a handful of new eateries that are creating a buzz both locally and internationally. *Sarah Khan* investigates ➤➤➤



IN THE SPOTLIGHT
Top left: The Guild's Archer Humphryes-designed dining room

STAR QUALITY
Middle left: Moonrise's Dubai-born chef, Solemann Haddad

GALLIC ÉLAN
Middle right: dinner à deux at Chez Wam

ROOM WITH A VIEW
Bottom: stellar skyline vistas at Moonrise

THE COALFACE
Right: an artful 11 Woodfire plate



» There was a time not too long ago when very few self-respecting gourmands would dare venture beyond the comfortable confines of their chosen hostelries for rations that were conjured up in the city writ large. After all, with so many gastronomic satellites of A-list chefs from London and Paris to Tokyo and beyond dotting Dubai's many hotels like a never-ending constellation, why would you? How things have changed. Today, a wave of ambitious toques are adding to the menu of choices – pun intended – debuting fresh, homegrown concepts that cater to the city's uniquely cosmopolitan clientele.



Case in point is **The Guild** (theguilddubai.com), which could be Dubai's dreamiest dining destination. Over the last decade, Aussie chef Tom Arnel has become synonymous with the city's hippest hangouts – a café juggernaut that includes Tom & Serg, The Sum of Us and Common Grounds, to name a few – but the buzz surrounding this opulent opening in the glitzy DIFC neighbourhood proves that Arnel has reached new heights. Some of that might be because the Guild is more of a journey through a series of distinct enclaves than a mere restaurant, with leafy corners and tucked-away pools setting the scene for a brasserie, champagne lounge, cigar bar and more. But as much as the ever-surprising interiors – by Archer Humphryes Architects, the team behind London stalwart Chiltern Firehouse – may seduce the gaze, it's the dizzying assortment of food and drinks on offer that demands repeat visits.

Looking for something a little more intimate? Book (or at least try to book) one of the 12 seats at the counter of **Moonrise** (moon-rise.xyz), a unique omakase experience on the rooftop of a residential tower overlooking the city's downtown. Here, the Dubai-born-and-bred wunderkind Solemann Haddad earned his first Michelin star this year by showcasing an inventiveness that belies his young age, marrying Japanese and Middle Eastern flavours in an only-in-the-UAE menu: think hamachi sashimi with Syrian sumac, foie gras pani puri, and tomatoes with zaatar, labneh, and nori furikake. Then there's chef Himanshu Saini's **Tresind Studio** (tresindstudio.com), which promises another creative degustation experience, this one rooted in Indian flavours and techniques. Dubai is home to a sizable Indian community and has no shortage of restaurant offerings specialising in every corner of the subcontinent, and yet Saini manages to dazzle diners – and Michelin inspectors, as the restaurant's two stars attest – with his mastery of nuanced dishes such as mustard and miso scallops, ghee roast crab with curry leaf crisp, and rhubarb and strawberry paan.

While Dubai continues to be a gourmet playground for some of the world's most legendary chefs, Akmal Anuar may be poised to become the first



THE EPICUREAN

HOT NUMBER

Akmal Anuar's
11 Woodfire is an ode
to wood-fired cooking



CATCH OF THE DAY

Right: flame-cooked
fish at 11 Woodfire

GOLDEN HOUR

Left: the warmly lit
Orfali Bros dining room



Dubai heavyweight to go global in a big way. His Michelin-starred **11 Woodfire** (11woodfire.com), a celebration of wood-fired cooking in a converted villa in the sophisticated Jumeirah district, is the jewel in his growing empire's crown. Apart from an impressive collection of restaurants with cult followings throughout the UAE – Goldfish Sushi & Yakitori in Dubai; Abu Dhabi's Otoro; Mavia Café in the Al Faya desert among them – he also launched the buzzy 53 in New York in 2022 and returned home to Singapore to open Harummanis this year. Next up this winter: a seaside Italian restaurant, **Osteria Funkcoolio**, in Dubai's new Port de La Mer island.

How does one define comfort food in a global city like Dubai? Its creatives have lately been serving up their takes, and there are no wrong answers. Chef Kelvin Cheung crisscrossed the globe, from Canada and the US to Hong Kong and India, before settling in Dubai – and his Asian-American brasserie **Jun's** (junsdubai.com) has been a smash success ever since he opened its doors in 2022. Settle in for dishes like spinach-saag dip, lamb koobideh tsukune, and





A FAMILY AFFAIR

Left: A typically vibrant plate at Orfali Bros
Below: the Syrian-born siblings behind it

RAW TALENT

Bottom: the open kitchen at French chef Hadrien Villedieu's restaurant Chez Wam



SWEET TALK

Above: a delectable dessert at omakase hit Moonrise

XO sauce lobster spaghetti that have had the likes of actor Brian Cox (aka Logan Roy) waxing rhapsodic – or, if you just want to graze on a quick order of bang bang cauliflower followed by a slice of one of Cheung's famous Kelvin cakes, stop by the brand-new Little Jun's outpost at Dubai's Time Out Market.

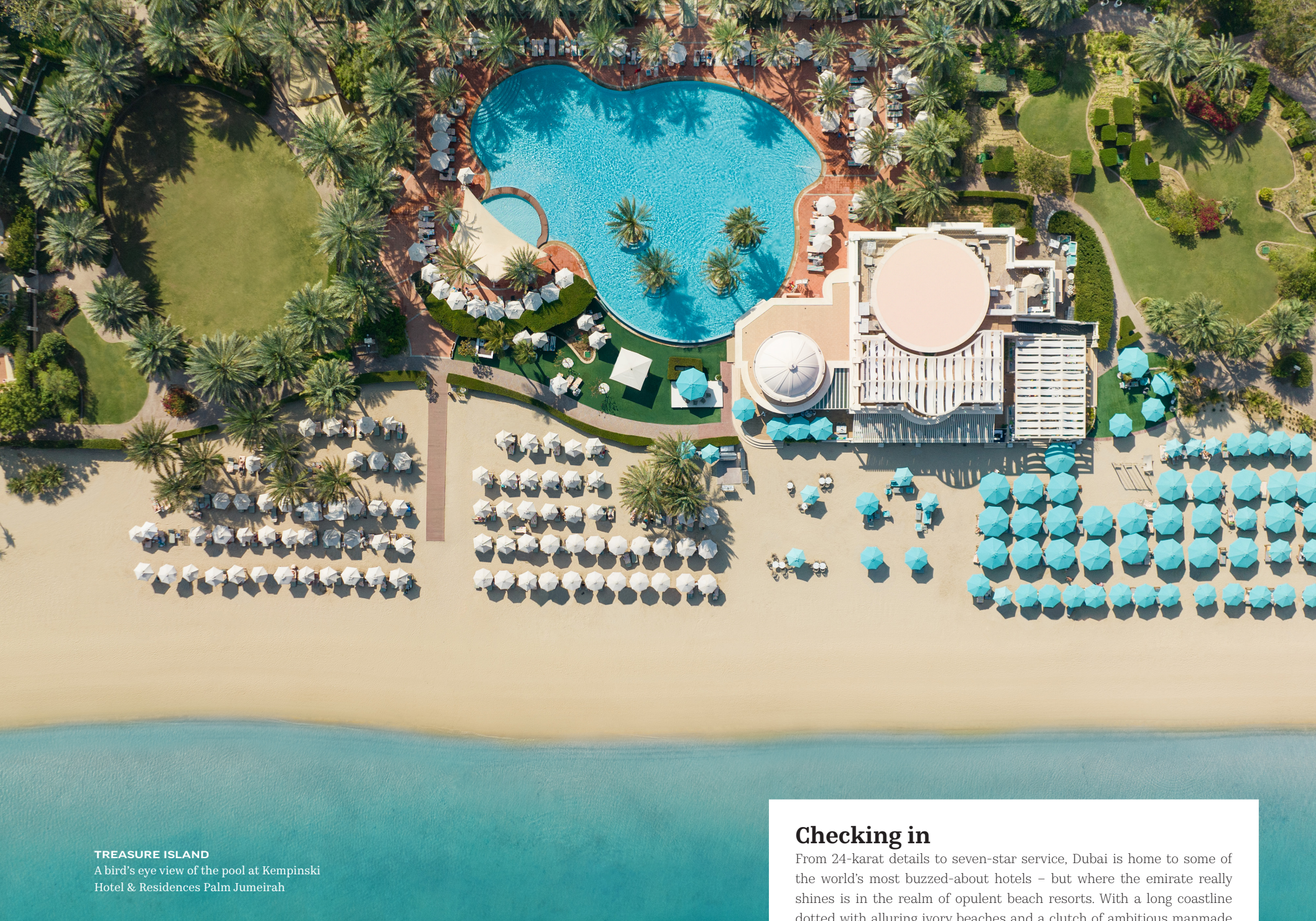
When TV chef Mohammed Orfali teamed up with siblings Wassim and Omar to open **Orfali Bros** (orfalibros.com) in Jumeirah in 2021, he described his fare as “con-fusion”, blending the ingredients of their hometown of Aleppo, Syria, with Japanese, Mexican and Chinese influences. If the standout shish barak à la gyoza – a trio of wagyu dumplings with garlic yoghurt, sujuk oil and pine nuts – is any indication, there's nothing confusing about the result.

After training under the likes of Joël Robuchon and Alain Passard, French chef Hadrien Villedieu decided to have some fun with his convivial new Palm Jumeirah eatery **Chez Wam** (chezwam.ae). Make your way to the always-busy dining room – where work by the celebrated Dubai-based French-Tunisian calligraphy artist eL Seed is on display – to slurp local oysters with smoked bloody mary or nosh on a foie gras bao with plum sauce; for a touch of drama, consider rocking up at the six-seater chef's table and letting Villedieu have his way with your dinner.

Winter in Dubai is best spent blissed out at one of the city's seemingly endless array of beach clubs. While there are plenty to choose from, **Tagomago** (tagomago.ae) made quite the splash when it brought a touch of Ibiza to the Palm Jumeirah this summer. Let some of the best people-watching in Dubai unfold as you nibble on Spanish bites under jaunty orange umbrellas.



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TREASURE ISLAND
A bird's eye view of the pool at Kempinski
Hotel & Residences Palm Jumeirah

Checking in

From 24-karat details to seven-star service, Dubai is home to some of the world's most buzzed-about hotels – but where the emirate really shines is in the realm of opulent beach resorts. With a long coastline dotted with alluring ivory beaches and a clutch of ambitious manmade archipelagos adding even more sandy real estate to the mix, there's no shortage of seaside luxe, whether your preferences skew bohemian-chic or baby-friendly. On the artificial Pearl Jumeirah island in the Al Mina neighbourhood in the north, **Nikki Beach Dubai** (dubai.nikkibeach.com) manages to feel like a true escape just minutes from the Burj Khalifa, channelling the sensibility of a breezy Aegean beach resort. The soft alabaster sands are mirrored by 117 whitewashed rooms and 15 villas, with subtle blue accents in the interiors reflecting the azure waters glimpsed from every direction. Ever since it welcomed the first guests to its loungers and cabanas in 2016, the sexy beach club has been a firm favourite with locals and visitors alike.

On the outermost ring of the iconic Palm Jumeirah, **Anantara the Palm Dubai** (anantara.com/en/palm-dubai) is a much more family-friendly retreat. The kids' and teens' clubs are a major draw here, with an endless array of activities ranging from yoga and cupcake-making classes to archery and encounters with the hotel's falcon, Shahin. Anantara boasts Dubai's only overwater villas, which is another feather in its cap for families, but any of the Lagoon Access rooms are a hit as well – after all, why walk to breakfast when you can swim from your doorstep?

Set on the Palm's West Crescent, there are 244 suites and villas spread across the sprawling **Kempinski Hotel & Residences Palm Jumeirah** (kempinski.com/en/palm-jumeirah), and you're guaranteed a stunning view of the skyline, the inner fronds of the Palm, or the endless azure water. For the ultimate relaxation, be sure to summon an indulgent treatment – say, an Ayurvedic massage or a Balinese-inspired facial – to your room, courtesy of the hotel's Cinq Mondes spa. ■



THE BREAKFAST CLUB
Start the day right in Anantara the
Palm Dubai's Crescendo restaurant