

Dine & Dukes

— Malta's first ever noodle bar

THE former Duke's Nightclub at the Corinthia Beach Resort in St George's Bay has been re-launched as Dine & Dukes to introduce the first ever noodle bar and club to the island.

Better known in the West in their dehydrated form as a quick snack prepared in three minutes with the addition of boiling water, noodles are practically sacred in Asia, where fundamental eating habits are based on harmonious ideals like freshness and natural purity, ensuring high food value for a nutritious, healthy diet.

This Asian culinary culture also dictates that food has to look good — the Asians eat first with their eyes.

Food not only eliminates hunger and satisfies the appetite, it restores inner harmony. Which is why portions are always moderate and light.

Conforming to this philosophy of 'valuable' sustenance is another concept: raw power — the inexplicable rejuvenating properties found in uncooked fruit and vegetables. Nutritionists will confirm that the most effective way to consume all the goodness contained in fruit and vegetables is to drink them in raw juice form.

At Dine & Dukes, these principles are adhered to religiously. In fact, all key ingredients are imported from Japan. But the club has added its own principle — it offers good music.

Patrons may either pop in for a healthy, quick snack and dine at the bar, or at a more leisurely pace at a table with a good view of the large video wall — either way, patrons will enjoy a taste of Asia to the beat of popular chart music, carefully selected by the resident DJ to suit the mood of the evening.

Diners may choose from the carefully compiled menu of juices, side orders, main dishes, rice and desserts.

There are three 'raw power' juices — carrot, momo (a pure cocktail of pear, strawberry, kiwi, pineapple and melon juice), and freshly squeezed orange juice.

There is a selection of nine noodle dishes including soup-based noodles, sauce-based noodles and stir-fried noodles. All dishes are served to order using the three main types of *menrui* (Japanese for noodles): ramen, udon or soba.

Chinese-style Ramen noodles, thread-like and bound with egg, are one of Japan's most popular fast foods. Ramen dishes are traditionally served with chicken or pork broth. For vegetarians, Ramen noodles are served with a vegetable broth base.

The Ramen noodles selection includes Pork Ramen (with slices of soy braised pork, seasonal greens,



bean sprouts and spring onions); Seafood Ramen (grilled marinated salmon, steamed prawns, a variety of seaweed, fish cakes and spring onions); Chilli Beef or Chicken Ramen (sliced peppered tenderloin of beef or grilled Szechwan chicken breast, bean sprouts, onion slices and coriander); or Dukes Ramen (grilled chilli chicken breast, steamed prawns and a variety of seaweed).

Made from wheat flour, Udon noodles are thick and white.

Curry Udon is served with a sauce made from prawns, squid and sweet peppers in a Thai curry sauce. Sweet and sour Chicken Udon noodles are stir-fried with egg, chicken, leeks, beansprouts, and peanuts.

Tracing their origin to early 17th century Tokyo, traditional Japanese Soba noodles are made from buckwheat flour.

Vegetable soup-based Moyashi Soba noodles are topped with a quick stir fry of courgettes, oyster mushrooms, bean sprouts, spring onions, garlic and leek; Tuna Soba noodles are served with a sauce of spring onion, chillies, garlic, ginger, shrimp paste and sweet peppers, topped with grilled marinated yellow fin tuna steak; Four Mushroom Soba noodles are stir-fried with spring onion, white and brown mushrooms, oyster mushrooms, and shiitake mushrooms with a touch of sesame oil.

Most appetites should be satisfied with one noodle dish and two side orders (in true Japanese style, there are no starters).



The Sweet and Sour Rice is steamed and topped with grilled pork loin and stir-fried mushrooms. Ebi Rice is fried with shrimp, tiger prawn, leeks, spinach, ginger and seaweed in a lemon infused sauce.

Side dishes include the Dukes Combo Platter (a combination of carefully chosen items for two persons, including two fried prawns in lime and ginger coating, two teriyaki chicken skewers, two vegetable spring rolls, shared chilled pork and chicken stir fried salad, and two dipping sauces); Ebi Gyoza (three fried king prawn and water chestnut dumplings with chilli sauce); Ebi Katsu (three deep fried king prawns in lime and ginger coating, with lemon and garlic oil); Yasai Spring

Rolls (five vegetarian spring rolls with soy dip); Yasai Tempura (deep fried courgette, asparagus and mushrooms in tempura batter with a dipping sauce); Negima Teriyaki (three skewers of char-grilled chicken breast marinated in soy sauce, brown sugar, ginger and garlic); Pork and Chicken Stir-Fry Salad (served in a crispy rice flour shell with tossed seasonal greens).

Six items on the menu are suitable for vegetarians.

Dine & Dukes at the Corinthia Beach Resort, St George's Bay, serves food from 7 p.m. to midnight, Tuesday through to Sunday with extended hours to 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. The club is open till late.

Massive work on food of the world has chapter on Malta

ON OCTOBER 15 Malta was represented at a delightful reception given by Oxford University Press to launch the publication of *The Oxford Companion to Food* — a massive global work which has taken its author over 20 years to complete. The party took place at Vinopolis — a breathtakingly large and cavernous temple to wine recently opened in a former warehouse in the historic London borough of Southwark.

The author of this immensely learned work (it has already won an award) — which runs to over 800 pages and weighs more than two kilos — is Alan Davidson, a former British diplomat who served in Egypt, Tunisia and Washington, among other places, and was Ambassador in Vientiane. He left the service to follow a rich second career as a food historian, publisher and writer.

Perhaps his most outstanding book before this opus is *Mediterranean Seafood*, but there are a number of others, including a delightful irreverent novel — *Something Quite Big* — about the kidnapping of an entire NATO committee.

Davidson is a warm, generous, unassuming man who shrugs off his many achievements. He has written more than 80 per cent of this work, the remaining sections were written by contributors from all over the world. The work is a reference book *par excellence*, full of historical information about the place of food in religion and culture, about mythology, and dietary laws. It is about staple foods, as well as styles and flavours both past and present. It brings together every society on earth. The book is illustrated with exquisite and delicate drawings by the Laotian artist Soun Vannithone.

The small section on food in Malta and Gozo is written by Anne and Helen Caruana Galizia, authors of *The Food and Cookery of Malta*.

The Oxford Companion to Food is about much more than food and eating and will bring knowledge and pleasure to anyone interested in history, people and societies.

BRIGHT, clear colour of rubies and sapphires, sparkling with the vitality of youth. Full of cherries and plums, grass and tar, deep, penetrating aroma of earth, pepper, turmeric, parsley, mint and sage. Big, huge body and mouth coating with an attack of chicken stuffed with sage and almonds ending with a long-lasting flavour of stewed hare mixed with prunes, porcini and fried polenta!

What!? Attacked by a chicken? Deep and penetrating? Tarmac and jewellery!? What am I talking about!?

Well, some years ago I was watching a wine programme on BBC and the presenter used the above tasting note, or something very similar, to describe a young Barolo she was tasting. Now I have been tasting wine for the past 15 years or so and up till now I have never come across a Barolo that attacked me with a herb and spice throwing chicken that looks like rubies and sapphires. What was she talking about?

As you know most bottles of wine nowadays have back labels with tasting notes on them, and after tasting, very often I end up asking that very same question. What are they talking about? Now, I am the first to admit and promote the idea that wine is very personal and subject to opinion, but honestly, the degree of imagination that some of these back labels have would have Barry Norman class them at best as sci-fi and at worst as tearjerker.

Tasting notes

by Michael Tabone

It seems that certain wine makers feel they have to use bombastic, pretentious, sometimes illusionistic language to justify the prices of some of their wines. They make wild claims of fruit-packed wines, when the only resemblance to fruit is the unnatural sweetness that the unfermented added sugar gives. Crisp and refreshing acidity, when the only fresh flavour there is of the newly opened test tube of tartaric acid. Smooth and balanced, meaning light, limpid and insipid wine that is way past it.

Labels that assume huge aging potential when the only future the wine has is equal to that of a hibiscus flower just before sunset. Deceiving allegations of lightly oaked barrel flavours when the wine tastes like oak tea made with oak chips and worst of all, pretensions of patriotism, charm, nobility, maturity, uniqueness, and award-winning.

Now I am not suggesting or expecting to see labels saying: "This is an everyday wine made cheaply and without

any pretensions. It is made from second rate grapes to be sold cheaply and drunk (in large quantities) with your most basic foods. One per cent of the alcohol is made from the addition of sugar and to keep the wine fresh sulphur dioxide was added." Actually, why not? What is wrong with being honest? After all, the

biggest demand for wine, all over the world, is for cheap everyday stuff that normal people can afford.

Many young or novice wine lovers look for these tasting notes to lead them through the various aspects and flavours of wine. The information contained on the bottle represent a direct and basic form of tuition and wine makers and marketing people everywhere have a duty not to mislead or confuse, and to be as accurate and honest as possible for all consumer's sake. Maybe more of them should read Jancis Robinson!

While on the subject of females and honesty, I was recently in Bordeaux discussing the 1997 vintage with a female oenologist friend of mine who has been making wine since she was a child, first in her father's chateau and more recently in her own. She was telling me that 1997 was a very difficult vintage and that she did not manage to grow very good wine at her chateau, although it was much better at her father's. Now, I don't suspect that she is going to put that on her labels — mind you, knowing her, she probably would. Honest, eh?

More please!