

# Restaurant Awards 2009

After another year of anonymous dining and independent judging, we present Dubai's definitive eating-out prize. Ladies and gentlemen, here are the winners

## Themed awards

### BEST BAR FOOD

#### Left Bank

Souk Al Bahar

#### Highly commended

Barasti, Le Méridien Mina Seyahi; Nezesausi, Al Manzil Hotel

Barasti has long been one of our favourite bar spots, not just for the music and beach setting, but for the high-end pub grub. For this reason, we gave it the best bar food award for the past two years running.

While the quality hasn't deteriorated at Barasti, it also hasn't moved forward, making way for another winner this year: the new Left Bank venue at the Souk Al Bahar. It has a sophisticated atmosphere and relaxed, cool vibe, and its concept for bar food is fresh (the chorizo makes a nice alternative to fish and chips).

It is easily our favourite bar opening of the year to boot, so we could see no reason not to give it the top title. For those who like standard bar food done well, Barasti is still an excellent choice, as is Nezesausi, which, in spite of its sports-bar demeanour, has live cooking stations that pull together some amazing eats, including a rich, smoky South African barbecue.



### BEST BUSINESS LUNCH

#### The Exchange Grill

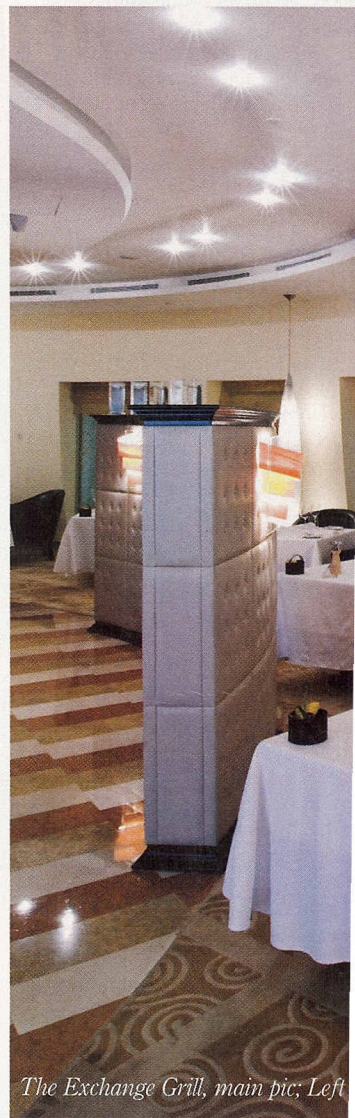
The Fairmont

#### Highly commended

Café Chic, Le Méridien Dubai; Certo, Radisson SAS, Dubai Media City

A business lunch needs to be many things to be successful. It needs to be impressive, it needs to be quick, and it needs to be easy to get to. The food also has to be approachable enough to satisfy a number of palates. While we gave the award to Vu's last year, this year we found its menu a little too conceptual for your average businessman (or for us, really). However, we found we'd have zero qualms in taking a client or business partner out to The Exchange Grill. The steakhouse launched its business menu this year, favouring à la carte over the set format we've come to expect.

We couldn't help but be impressed by the quality of the food (who wouldn't be enamoured by a juicy slab of wagyu for lunch?). It was a close call, though. Café Chic might have edged it, had its exquisite menu not taken too long to execute on occasions. Certo was also a close contender; we loved that they served two courses for a mere Dhs75. But for sheer decadence, we just had to go with The Exchange Grill.



The Exchange Grill, main pic; Left