



Mouth-wateringly Middle Eastern: a selection of kebabs from Maroush

Meze movement

Tuck into the finest Middle Eastern cuisine London has to offer



Sweet as a nut: the pistachio bil ghazal dessert is served up at Abd El Wahab

When it comes to feasting, nothing quite hits the mark like Lebanese food. As masters of small and sharing plates, the Lebanese have got delicious dishes down to a fine art. It's easy to host a banquet in your own home when Deliveroo will bring it all to your door. The hard bit is deciding which delights to choose.

MAROUSH

London-wide
Open since 1981, Maroush is now a London institution. Marouf and Houda Abouzaki fled what was then war-torn Lebanon and began serving the foods of their home country from their Edgware Road restaurant. Since then their generous portions, sharing culture, and modern twist on Lebanese street food, all made by hand from well-sourced ingredients, have made it a firm favourite in the capital.

When it comes to Lebanese food you can't get more iconic than the kebab. Lamb is traditional, and Maroush's shawarma comes as roasted slices of marinated lamb served with sesame oil sauce, onion, parsley, and tomato.



ABD EL WAHAB

Belgravia
Those who've travelled in the Middle East will know the name Abd El Wahab. As a favourite Lebanese restaurant in the region, the chain is a go-to for those in the know. They recently opened their first European outpost right here in London, bringing us the meze and mains that brought them renown at home.

You should also save space to satisfy your sweet tooth. Pistachio bil ghazal is an absolute must: pistachio dough stuffed with ice cream made from sahlab, a Beirut milk pudding drink.

ZUFA

Hatch End and Northwood
Founded in the village of Tannourine in northern Lebanon and established in London by Joseph Harb, Zufa is a family business. Everything you'd expect to find at their restaurant in Lebanon you'll also find here: top-quality ingredients, a large choice of authentic, appetising dishes, and Lebanese

hospitality at its finest. A firm favourite is Castaletta (left), a dish of smoky, marinated lamb cutlets. Served with salad, it's a quintessential Lebanese dish.

WALEEMA

Battersea, Swiss Cottage and Whitechapel
Waleema's name comes from the Arabic word "awlam", which means to gather and feast in celebration of life. It sums up this restaurant's attitude to eating – the food has been made with love, so put down your phone, take time out, and get sharing these plates of delicious, authentic Lebanese cuisine.

Our recommendation? Fragrant rosemary, lemon and thyme infuse Waleema's irresistibly exotic house recipe chicken thighs, which are chargrilled and served with garlic sauce.



Fragrant: Waleema's tasty chicken thighs

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There's a Claire in everyone

TELEVISION

Sian Clifford plays Fleabag's control freak older sister. She tells *Susannah Butter* why this season packs such a brutal emotional punch

PEOPLE tell me that Claire is a b*tch," says Sian Clifford, mounting a defence of the character she plays in BBC comedy Fleabag. "She's not. I relate to her so much and I've had beautiful messages from women saying, 'I'm that one, or my sister is like Claire and I love her more now'. There's a part of Claire in everyone."

Fleabag's highly strung older sister is a control freak to the point where she plans her own surprise party; she subjects herself to exacting standards, and hates it when Fleabag outshines her.

Waller-Bridge wrote the part for Clifford, who today is managing to keep her inner Claire at bay. The spring sunshine is making her "feel like I can do anything" and she is fizzing with excitement about Fleabag finally being aired, asking me if I gasped when I saw it.

She and Waller-Bridge have been friends since their third day at Rada, in 2003, when they caught the Central line back to Ealing together. "We're both from there but grew up on different sides of the tracks," says Clifford. "We stepped into the carriage and eyed each other up," she mimes an appraising look. "By the end of the journey we were thick as sates."

Rada was "challenging" for both of

them. "I didn't see the best of Phoebe at drama school," Clifford continues. "She wasn't nurtured. I witnessed her when people didn't want to take as much notice, and now I'm like 'Sit up and notice this woman! We had this unspoken pact that whoever got there first would haul the other up.'"

Waller-Bridge only started writing once she had left Rada. "We'd both be temping and she'd email me a script to ask for my opinion," says Clifford. "It would be the best thing I'd read. I don't know how she captures language in such an accurate way."

When Fleabag was commissioned, Waller-Bridge "had to fight" for Clifford to be auditioned. "I didn't have that much TV experience and this industry wants to put people in categories." She's since expanded her CV, playing Martha Crawley in ITV's Vanity Fair.

But it was a pleasure to return to Claire, nearly three years since the first series. "Phoebe sent me the script and I sent her back a picture of me reading it, bawling my eyes out. Phoebe took time away after series one and gained perspective. I'd love more production houses to encourage artists to create what they want and not just churn things out."



Sister act: Clifford with Phoebe Waller-Bridge in Fleabag

GAMING STICK 'EM UP (AGAIN): ANTHEM'S JUST

HOW MANY shoot-and-loom titles can a gamer really enjoy? There's a glut at the moment, and Anthem has been launched into this overpopulated area. But is it equipped to compete?

The game is developed by BioWare and published by EA, and is set on an unnamed planet where players assume the role of Freelancers, heroic adventurers who defend humanity from the threats beyond their cities' walls. The game derives its name from the Anthem of Creation, an underlying

force responsible for the threats posed to you. Your main task is to stop enemies from taking over.

Anthem is structured as a co-op multiplayer for missions, and so it encourages the social gaming aspect that many games now seem to lack. It's an interesting approach to a shared-world game, and one that BioWare claims it has spent "years" trying to perfect. But the insistence on co-op play means the solo experience is fairly limited.