

For foodies in the UAE, one world famous chef no longer maketh the meal. Instead, “four hands” dinners are increasingly taking over kitchens across Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The term refers to two renowned chefs teaming up to create set menus, often pairing unique flavours, ingredients and techniques they have built their names on as individuals to create a show-stopping collaboration.

Four hands, two chefs, one unforgettable meal – so the idea goes.

In the UAE, four hands dinners are nothing new, though over the years appetites have grown from one-off events to bespoke menus spread across weekends at some of the finest restaurants in the country – with a tantalising array taking place this month.

Diners visiting Michelin-starred Ossiano tomorrow or Thursday will be treated to a collaboration between head chef Gregoire Berger and celebrated Spanish chef Andoni Luis Aduriz, of two Michelin-starred Mugaritz. It will mark French chef Berger's fourth four hands of the year.

On the same days, Atmosphere will also get in on the trend with an eight-course dinner by Michelin-lauded French chef Arnaud Dunand Sauthier and the Burj Khalifa venue's chef Eka Mochamad.

Burj Al Arab will host two experiences this month. The first, served on November 15 and 16, is a collaboration between Italian Michelin-lauded chef Nino Di Costanzo and Jumeirah executive chef Andrea Migliaccio at Ristorante L'Olivo at Al Mahara.

The second, to run on November 28 and 29 at Al Muntaha, will welcome German Michelin-lauded chef Daniel Gottschlich and head chef Saverio Sbaragli.

Throw in a four hands feast at Pierchic on November 20 (chefs Beatrice Segoni and Luca Crostelli) and an Italian-themed collaboration at Trattoria on Thursday and Friday (chefs Omar El Ajmi and Ciro Sicignano) and diners really are spoilt for choice.

But why are the best chefs in the UAE so keen to team up and – more importantly – what's in it for diners?

According to Berger, the trend has grown alongside the country's culinary prowess and is helping to establish its culinary scene on a global stage.

“I've been living in the region for over a decade and I've seen how the culinary landscape has changed over the years,” he says. “Four hands dinners and collaborative dining concepts have been on the rise in recent years.

“It strengthens the region's authority on the global stage, with carefully thought-out collaborations with globally recognised and celebrated chefs. The culinary world has its eyes

FOUR HANDS, TWO CHEFS AND ONE LAVISH MEAL

► Big names increasingly cook up success with kitchen collaborations. **Emma Pearson** speaks to double acts leading the way in the UAE



Clockwise from right, Tala Bashmi of Fusions by Tala in Bahrain; Gregoire Berger has found success working with other chefs; Atlantis The Royal's executive pastry chef Christophe Devoille. Mena's 50 Best; Ossiano; Atlantis The Royal

on Dubai. There is a lot more interest than ever before.”

Atlantis The Royal's executive pastry chef Christophe Devoille, who recently held his first four hands dinner by teaming up with Paul Occhipinti, echoes that sentiment.

“Since the world came out of the global pandemic, the region from a global perspective has been receiving more and more attention,” he says. “The chefs here have committed to a collective goal to showcase the culinary scene here, and a way of doing this is through the four hands dining experience, bringing globally recognised chefs to host these with.”

For Berger, the introduction of the *Michelin Guide* in Abu

Dhabi and Dubai, as well as the arrival of Mena's 50 Best Restaurants, has also set the bar and motivated industry leaders to go above and beyond to host “never-before-seen dining experiences”.

“For diners, we are providing novel opportunities for them to experience new flavours and culinary adventures, especially when two chefs create together, but it's much more than that,” he says.

“Through four hands, we express something different and we give diners a special moment that they will remember for ever. To attend and experience a four hands dinner is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. These unique showcases

are not often repeated with the same chefs.”

For Devoille, four hands dinners provide a new way of exploring food. “When two chefs unite, perfectly matched within one setting, multiple things are fused, including culture, vision, mindset and produce,” he adds. “When it comes to food enthusiasts, they like to explore and challenge their taste buds and four hands does exactly that.

“It's important to note that these are not initiated to make money but to create new experiences and draw in a new audience as well, so they see what the venue is about.”

In September, Tala Bashmi, chef patron of Fusions by Tala



in Bahrain, joined chef Andrew Lee of Hakkasan Abu Dhabi for a four hands dinner over two nights, blending the Middle Eastern and Cantonese cooking styles they are famous for. And it was in this meeting of culture, vision and produce

that the magic lay for the chefs and diners.

“Our different culinary flavours complemented each other – who would have thought that Chinese and Middle Eastern food would work so well together?” says

After Armani and Cavalli, Karl Lagerfeld joins high-end designers making

Karl Lagerfeld is set to be the latest luxury fashion house to turn its hand to property design after announcing a series of luxury villas in Dubai.

The late German designer's company will create the interiors for branded properties in the city in conjunction with boutique property developer Taraf. The homes will follow five Lagerfeld villas in Marbella that opened in 2021 and a hotel tower with branded residences that is to be built in Malaysia.

Revealing what villa owners can expect of the new interiors,

the company's chief executive Pier Paolo Righi explains it will “bring Karl's very unique idea of exclusive living to Dubai”. He says the design process will blend “the artistry of design with the art of real estate” to create an elevated experience.

A completion date for the properties has not yet been announced.

They will not be the first branded residences to open in the country. In 2019, Lebanese couture house Elie Saab announced plans to create the interiors for a project with Emaar. Called Grand Bleu

Tower, the double-towered building will be on Emaar Beachfront, facing the Palm Jumeirah, and have views across the sea.

It includes one to three-bedroom apartments and five and six-bedroom penthouses. Each apartment will be fully

They will join five luxury villas in Marbella that opened in 2021 and a hotel tower in Malaysia

furnished with custom-made furniture and fittings by Saab, in marble and elegant muted tones of caramel, sand, bronze and silver.

In 2010, Italian designer Giorgio Armani opened his first hotel in Burj Khalifa. The Armani Hotel is spread across floors one to eight and 38 to 39 of the world's tallest building. In between are eight floors of Armani-designed one and two-bedroom apartments, from 100 to 200 square metres.

Designed according to Armani's taste, the apartments are filled with furniture and

lighting by Armani Casa, the brand's home interiors company.

Like the fashion collections that made Armani's name, the interiors are sophisticated yet understated in tones of taupe, beige, grey and the designer's own colour, “greige”, and complemented with dark marble and stone.

In a yet-to-be-finished project, Armani is working with property developer Arada to create waterfront apartments on the Palm Jumeirah.

Elsewhere, Italian label Roberto Cavalli has designed

The interior of the villas in Marbella designed by Karl Lagerfeld





Bashmi. “We meticulously planned a 10-course collaboration to offer the best of both worlds for a unique dining experience.”

For Lee, the partnership certainly won't be his last in the kitchen.

“After the remarkable success of our collaboration with chef Tala, we are enthusiastically looking ahead to offer our guests more thrilling and innovative experiences,” he says.

“We firmly believe in the power of collaboration to elevate the dining experience and it's something we are actively exploring.”

As well as creating memorable experiences, four hands dinners also allow diners to experience the finest ingredients from around the world.

Before the menu planning stage, visiting chefs bring ingredients from their home regions, meaning diners in the UAE can feast on authentic dishes that burst with provincial flavour, the way the chefs have perfected them.

“Deciding on where ingredients are sourced from is an important stage of the menu



It strengthens the region's authority on the global stage ... the culinary world has its eyes on Dubai. There is a lot more interest

GREGOIRE BERGER
Ossiano

creation process,” says Berger. “When we create a new menu, chefs will explain what ingredients should be included based on what they use and like to work with.”

“We always go to the origins of most ingredients to find the perfect produce. For example, we have been able to source very specific rice from Spain to use in the upcoming four hands dinner.”

“It can be anything, from a specific type of trout egg, or even a specific type of fish.” Ahead of his afternoon tea last week, Devoille focused on finding the best ingredients. He says the pair discussed at length what produce they would bring to Dubai, and how they would introduce them to guests.

Occhipinti brought fresh rose petals from Greece, buddha hand citrus from Nice and lemons from the Amalfi coast in Italy. “It's been incredibly exciting to collaborate, share ideas and come up with a concept that will amaze diners, and have them reimagine dining through a new experience,” Devoille adds.

themselves at home in Dubai



houses in conjunction with property company Damac. Launched last year, the project features two and three-bedroom houses decorated with wallpaper and walls painted in distinctive tones.

The higher-end properties that extend up to six bedrooms come with grand, double-height dining rooms filled with bespoke furniture in muted gold, sand and grey, as well as Cavalli's signature use of animal prints including zebra and leopard.

Branded apartments designed by Swiss luxury jeweller

De Grisogono were also on the cards. However, after becoming embroiled in a financial scandal, the company declared bankruptcy in 2020.

Its apartments were then snapped up by Damac and relaunched as a real estate company called Safa One by de Grisogono. They are still under construction next to Safa Park in Dubai. Once finished, the apartments will be furnished in tones of emerald green and sapphire blue, and metals such as gold.

Sarah Maisey



The elegant Chalet Inoko blends traditional Alps design with modern interiors Purple Ski

Winter wonderland offers a dose of vitamin ski in the French Alps

French Alps ski resort Val d'Isere is a vast, radiant glen encircled by towering mountains whose snowy sides lead gracefully towards the valley below. With its wide variety of slopes covering 300km and splendid off-piste accessibility, this immense area offers skiers a choice of about 50 peaks, with altitudes ranging between 2,600 and 3,800 metres.

Located in the middle of a valley, Val d'Isere village has a cluster of ancient chalets built in traditional style using stone, wood and slate and a fine Baroque church at the centre. The rest of the resort is largely new, including a swanky shopping street at its heart for visitors to enjoy.

The skiing

The best way to start, after a short warm-up, is to tackle La Face first thing in the morning and make the most of fresh snow. The ski area is also equipped with high-level snow guns that cover more than 65km of the slopes – ensuring skiing lasts from November to May. The diversity of slopes, especially in the north, not only helps retain the snow, but also ensures its quality.

The resort offers a wide variety of winter activities, including dog sledding, snowmobile excursions and ice skating. It is also bursting with trails for walking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Electric mountain biking through the Manchet Valley is the newest trend. It involves hitting the slopes on a specially designed bike with fat tyres and a motor. Expert guides explain the techniques and show riders the ropes (and the resort's most stunning vistas) while cruising across the glittering white landscape.

Requiring rather less adrenaline, though still nerves of steel for some, ice floating offers a unique way to relax in



Val d'Isere is a quaint ski resort in the French Alps, near the Italian border
Balthazar Lelievre

the frozen lake of Ouillette, with the help of a dry suit. It is a sensory experience in crystal-clear lake water that sends floaters into a contemplative mood as they stare at the mountains in total silence and calm.

The chalet

Tucked away in the trees overlooking Val d'Isere, Chalet Inoko is immensely private and yet just a short walk or minibus ride away from the ski lifts at La Daille, l'Olympique or Solaise Express, and the resort's famous shopping and restaurant scene.

The chalet has blended traditional alpine touches with a strong modern design and state-of-the-art wellness area that includes an indoor pool, sauna and massage room – a haven after a long day on the pistes. On the same floor is a television room, unused by us, but ideal for entertaining teenagers or little ones. Outside, a sunken hot tub and seating around the fire pit beckon on clear nights.

The chalet's crowning jewel is its magnificent top floor, with double-height ceilings and enormous windows that flood the room with light. The seating around the stone fireplace is a wonderful spot to gather for canapes and drinks before dinner. Chalet Inoko

also has a dedicated team of on-call drivers to ferry guests to and from the slopes and around the resort.

The ski school

Oxygene's ski school in Val d'Isere has been offering lessons for more than 20 years. Options include group ski and snowboard sessions taught in English and French (and other languages besides), private classes and off-piste activities.

The food

Val d'Isere has a major food scene and offers tempting alternatives to eating in. Purple Ski is from the luxury property company behind Chalet Inoko. A freshly prepared breakfast and afternoon tea are served each day and a sumptuous four-course dinner is served six nights of the week.

Outside the chalet, La Folie Douce has been the Alps' most popular mountaintop restaurant and apres-ski club since 1969.

It combines the pleasures of generous mountain cuisine with the festive atmosphere of cabaret.

Refuge de Solaise, meanwhile, enjoys a prime position 2,550 metres up with a sprawling outdoor terrace and serves a decadent Italian menu with an alpine twist.

It's particularly famous for its truffle pasta dish.

Elsewhere, Savoyard specialties and local produce are the favourites at La Luge, the Blizzard Hotel's traditional wood-panelled fine-dining restaurant. With a dedicated fondue menu offering an array of cheese feasts, it is the ultimate place to end a successful day on the slopes.

Sarah Siese



Purple Ski aims to serve the best food in the Alps Purple Ski

A seven-night stay at Chalet Inoko starts at €45,420 (\$48,133) on a catered basis; www.purpleski.com