



Nargile

Every once in a while a new restaurant comes along that manages to set a (new) standard. One such case is that of recently opened Nargile, which is considered the gastro-event of the season. This new restaurant-lounge-bar has swiftly become the favorite new eatery of the hip and discerning crowd – business moguls and models, politicians and celebrities alike. The experience could best be described as a potent cocktail of exquisite Lebanese cuisine, world music, sensuous metropolitan ambience, attentive service, and, of course, superb cocktails. The sophisticated setting, which is the work of interior designer Ismini Karali, manages to capture the cosmopolitan, refined spirit that the owners had envisioned. The scene is seductive – a spacious dining area, bare wood bar, authentic Persian carpets, fireplace of Arabescato marble, red lounge sofas, Murano mirrors and Baccarat crystal. “Our objective was to create a contemporary, eclectic environment of international standards, where one could be entertained while relaxing and enjoying exceptional Lebanese cuisine. It was something that we felt was missing from the Athenian scene and, first and foremost, we wanted to create a space which we ourselves could enjoy,” explains Charlie Spassof, one of the co-owners of Greek-Lebanese descent, the other being Samir Sabbagh. “After extensive traveling, I realized that Greece is incomparable and there is no other place in the world where I would rather choose to live,” continues Spassof, “and therefore I, we, have made it the base for all my various business ventures.” Thus, naturally, as only the best will do for the discerning entrepreneurs, one of the top chefs, Antoine Tawk, was recruited directly via Beirut for the sole purpose of introducing us to authentic Lebanese cuisine at its very finest. The result is superb eastern delicacies that are just as delectable to the palate as to the eye. The oriental lamb is exquisite and the *mezé* variety platter is the perfect choice for those who want a taste of it all. The menu is extensive and the portions are generous, therefore pacing yourself is advised in order to, of course, leave room for one of the enticing dessert selections – either traditional eastern or one of the selections of renowned Stelios Parliaros. The wine list is thorough and includes authentic Lebanese *arak* (similar to Greek *raki*) as well as selections from the three major Lebanese wineries. The sensuous Lebanese ambience – complete with exotic belly dancers and nargile-smoking patrons – coupled with the exceptional authentic cuisine, comprise a superb dining experience.

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THALIA VRETTOS

- The Nargilomneller (as in sommelier) who will help guide you through the nargile tobacco menu, while suggesting various combinations of the seven types of tobacco on offer, will undoubtedly bring your nargile-smoking experience to new heights.
- Try to book a couple of days in advance. It is hard to get a reservation, although the exceptional maitre d' Noumeidin El Finali or Nor as he is widely known will always try to accommodate you and your every need with promptness and efficiency.
- Almaza is the name of the Lebanese beer which is exclusively imported and is definitely worth a try.
- The lavish buffet on Sundays is not to be missed (€35 for adults, €20 for children).
- The mini baklava pastries that accompany your coffee are tiny delights.

