


COMMERCIAL

Interior design

The essential guide for Middle East interior design professionals

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Inside the Westin's lounge
lobby and smart spaces

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BEST GUEST

Top designers on a quest
for the perfect room

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Glamour setting

An Italian themed grill with some famous names behind it gets a glamour look for the Dubai market



1 & 2. Frankie Dettori is one of two famous names behind the Frankie's restaurant franchise.

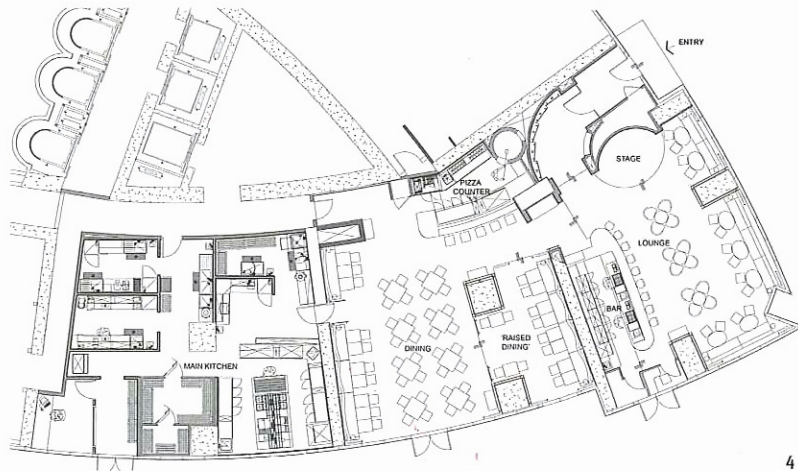
Frankie's is in some ways a brand that is less than the sum of its parts. But that's because it's parts are so big. Frankie Dettori and Marco Pierre White are massive names in the UK and with this region's affinity for racing and addiction to luxury dining, putting the two together was a recipe for success.

Although the recipe was tried and tested in the UK, bringing it to Dubai meant spicing it up, with a dash more glamour added to the look and feel of the restaurant. David Tokiwa of Singapore-based DBTA International had

the job of designing an interior that matched the restaurant's image and the needs of the Dubai market, for the franchise owner RMAL Hospitality.

"There's a large UK professional population over here who know the names behind Frankie's very well," said Tokiwa. "We were asked to glamourise the restaurant for the Dubai market."

"From my company's experience in the Middle East, over the last five or six years, we understand what the market is looking for. You have got to bear in mind how many new restaurants are opening every month. Distin-



guishing yourself is not easy with such a large number appearing.

“You have to take into consideration the mandate for a food and beverage (F&B) outlet is always the same. You are always trying to create a niche F&B outlet, one that will separate you from other restaurants. You also have to remember what kind of food it is and what its maximum price range is. The diners’ perception must be that you are creating extremely good value.”

Tokiwa thinks the street level location in Dubai Marina’s Al Fattan Towers ▶

3 & 5. The look of Frankie’s was given added touches of glamour by DBTA International.

4. Frankie’s floor plan.

6. The show case pizza kitchen.



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gives the place an advantage, as does its license.

“Unlike the UK operations which are an 80/20 split in favour of the dining rooms, ours is almost about equal with the bar area,” said Tokiwa. “We saw that the beverages would be a big component of the revenue stream. However, the dining component has probably overtaken about 50% of the bar area because the restaurant is fully booked nearly every night. Obviously we had to give it a 5-star feel to hit the glamour crowd in Dubai.”

This 5-star look is achieved through layers of details, finishes and accessories, as well as using the layout to create a sense of privacy in an open area.

A marble and custom-etched glass entry way leads people into the bar, which was also designed with an eye

to capturing the morning breakfast crowd from the building’s serviced apartments. As a result banquettes run around the bar’s perimeter, providing the flexibility needed to add table capacity during meal services.

The layout was particularly important because of the large number of structural walls, adding a challenge to the design process. Tokiwa cites the example of the kitchen, where getting

permission to penetrate the wall by one metre took the best part of six months.

“Because of the structure of the building, we had to come up with one of our most clever layouts to utilise the space and include all the necessary components,” said Tokiwa.

The restaurant, which seats about 80 in the dining room and 50 more, plus standing, in the bar area, is also

7. The design emphasises a plush and comfortable feel for the dining room.

8 & 9. Day and night curtains with custom-made timber ties help create a sense of luxury.

10. Live entertainment is part of the offer.





intended to keep guests comfortable for a long period. Lots of draperies and mood lighting are two devices used to create this comfortable atmosphere.

“This is a fine dining experience,” said Tokiwa. “It has to have a certain plushness and comfort.

“We’ve used to carpet to soften the feel of the space and we’ve also used draperies with day and night curtains, plus wave ceilings wrapped in a gold-hued wall covering, which almost looks like gold leaf. Custom pendant lights hang down to add some sparkle and are one of our key custom design elements.

“Beautiful accessories and artwork are also important for a lived in and cosy feel; there’s attention to detail in the curtain tie backs, timber sculptures, all details which just add a personalised feel to the space.”

Two main features in the restaurant are the bar area and the open showcase pizza kitchen. Tokiwa is clear that his company’s experience throughout the Asia-Pacific region and India shows that for nearly a decade



now, people have wanted to see the food being made. He sees a clear link between an open kitchen and reinforcing the idea of freshness to the patrons. A simplified menu for the showcase kitchen helps to make sure it operates smoothly.

“Show kitchens are used to give diners a view of how the food is being prepared, plus add in cooking aromas,” said Tokiwa. “It’s a stage element. Diners at Frankie’s can also hear, but may be not be able to see, musicians. There is a slight separation between the dining and the bar area,



partly as a noise buffer, but also for ease of access.

“I know a lot of the designs in this region are going for an overtly opulent look, but at end of day we believe in creating a good, solid, clean, contemporary, simple design for the right type of food service.

“We wanted to allow the diners to be the glamorous part of the restaurant and we wanted them to see the restaurant as a stylish comfortable back drop. We wanted repeat business, not just for it to be a special occasion restaurant.” 

11. A lounge area carries the comfort of the restaurant into the bar area.

12. Tables offer fine dining...

13. ... while the pizza kitchen offers preparation on display.