



Charcoal makes it's home at The Saujana Hotel

COUNTRY GRILL

Charcoal teleports you to a scenic oasis outside of the city

WORDS BY JESSICA FANG PICTURES BY THE SAUJANA HOTEL



If there's one very evident trend that's been cropping up in the F&B industry, it's the increasing number of dining and drinking venues that are amping up efforts to create small oases of nature-inspired, "green" surroundings for discerning diners who need fresh pit stops amid the rapidly expanding concrete jungle of the Klang Valley. However these efforts to mimic natural surroundings are often confined to the walls and façade of these establishments. So we do the next best thing, we head a little way's out of town for a change of scene, complete with rolling green hills, a tranquil lake, and palm trees swaying in the breeze at The Saujana Hotel Kuala Lumpur's latest new dining feature, Charcoal.

To begin with, The Saujana Hotel removes

you almost entirely from the hectic pace of the city, set against acres of a calming green, natural landscape. The hotel recently introduced Charcoal, an open grill restaurant that aims to set itself apart from the traditional idea of Western grill rooms and steak houses. The restaurant "brings the outdoors in" with picturesque floor-to-ceiling glass panels and skylights that fill the room with natural sunlight. A patio area also allows for al fresco dining while the inner portion of the restaurant provides partitioned areas for private dining parties or meetings.

Now, don't get me wrong—although it's essentially a grill that brings its guests closer to the countryside, Charcoal doesn't skimp on elegance and trendiness. Decked in earthy and wooden tones and textures, the furnishing is



Fresh cuts are prepared in the open kitchen

“To begin with, The Saujana Hotel removes you almost entirely from the hectic pace of the city, set against acres of a calming green, natural landscape”

modern in design, with a mix of leather dining chairs, comfortable settees, smooth black countertops and simple black wooden tables. A wall of firewood behind the grill serves two functions: one might initially think that it's simply a decorative feat for a rustic touch, but instead the wall stores the actual firewood that is used in the cooking process. Meanwhile, sleek black beams frame the restaurant, while each piece of tableware and glassware is minimalist and ornamental in nature. As the sun sets, each table at the al fresco dining area features striking dots of illuminating blue table lamps, for subtle dashes of colour which results in an overall atmosphere that uniquely combines the countryside, opulence and contemporary style.

One of the highlights of Charcoal is its open show kitchen and grill, where guests can see their dishes being prepared by skilled chefs. Helmed by Australian Chef Robert Johnston, the grill's concept is inspired by the simple, ancient technique of cooking over charcoal, paired with the Malaysian culture of using condiments, dips and sauces to add dimension to the flavour of chargrilled prime cuts of meat, fresh seafood

and poultry.

The menu offerings leave you spoilt for choice. For meat connoisseurs, Charcoal's top dishes include the South Australian 100% Black Angus Tomahawk Steak (grain-fed for 120 days), Murraylands French cut Rack of Lamb, and the easy favourites such as beef rib-eyes, tenderloins and short ribs. Each cut is grilled to perfection, infused with the unique flavour that only real charcoal grills can produce. We tried the newest item on the menu, the T-Bone steak, or rather, the huge slab of meat that would prove itself to be juicy and succulent with rich streaks of fatty tissue running through the meat. The Rack of Lamb was also our favourite of the meal, as its sinful tenderness and meaty flavour proved to be rather addictive.

We also tried the grilled Mackerel off the seafood menu, which was rather generous in size as we were presented with the entire fish, freshly cooked to perfection with a crisp layer of skin. Seafood lovers are also pampered with choices at Charcoal, as fresh seafood is grilled and served on aromatic banana leaves. Guests can choose to either have their favourites



The Friday seafood spread



Specially themed buffet spreads are available from Thursdays to Saturdays

grilled plain and served with the restaurant's selection of local dips, or tantalise their tastebuds with some of the highlights such as the whole Wild Sarawak Garoupa in turmeric and sea salt rub, tiger prawns with kaffir lime leaves and lemongrass marinade, and Sabah Rock Lobster with ginger and coriander.

Topping off each dish is the availability of Charcoal's signature sambals, sauces and dips, all made in-house, which spans a deliciously addictive green chilli sambal (Chef Johnston told us that he eats this sambal with his sandwiches), a barbecue sauce for the Western palate, a Nyonya-style red chilli garlic sauce, and many more. We can attest that the various sauces are indeed, a must try. Additionally, Charcoal's menu offers the authentic peranakan cuisine of Auntie Belle's mouth-watering nyonya-classics. Special themed buffets are also available every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, featuring Nyonya Peranakan, Seafood, and Barbecue themed spreads respectively.

Each dish can also be paired with one of Charcoal's house wines, bottled exclusively for the restaurant. The restaurant even has its own signature water, which arrives to the table in a cylinder decanter that holds a piece of charcoal as a natural water purifying agent. Ultimately, it's these details added to the atmosphere, presentation and preparation that makes Charcoal unique altogether. ♻️

For reservations call +60378431234 (ext 6122) or email charcoal@thesaujana.com

