

DUBAI RESTAURANTS: AUTHORITIES EASE UP ON ALCOHOL BAN



Having previously shown absolutely no tolerance whatsoever towards alcohol, the authorities of Dubai have started to ease up. New regulations expect to respect Islamic laws about alcohol and appease the drinking and gastronomic habits of non-Muslims.

Avoiding alcohol is understandable, banning alcohol is understandable yet seemingly unnecessary, whereas not allowing a drop of alcohol in cooking seems utterly absurd. However, due to strict Islamic laws, this is the situation in Dubai. No coq au vin, no flambéed sweets and no brandy sauces. Basically, any French restaurant in Dubai is likely to face bankruptcy. The fines introduced to hotels reached up to \$130,000 for persistent offenders and fear of alcohol reigned in the gulf sheikdom. However, the situation is easing up. **The locals have realized that 85% of the population of Dubai is made up of foreigners, many of which are non-Muslim.** The locals have a reputation for being extremely conservative, yet the pressure to change from the foreign invasion is proving too great. It is expected that alcohol and dishes containing alcohol could make an appearance on hotel menus.

Chefs and hotels expect to hear the decision that there need to be a warning on restaurant menus for Muslim people that the given dish contains alcohol. The “contains traces of nuts” label we are all used to will change to “contains traces of alcohol”. This method keeps everybody happy and makes it much easier to identify what contains what.

Fears have been raised that this can only lead to a further separation of the communities, yet the Muslim community is much outnumbered. Giving people a choice and not enforcing religious laws, which not everybody respects is surely the way forward for a very important place in the Middle East.

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Date: 2010-04-05

Article link: <http://www.tourism-review.com/dubai-restaurants-alcohol-ban-canceled--news2127>