

Client: Grosvenor House & Le Meridien Beach Resort & Spa
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Modern Mexican

Fine dining and Mexican cuisine is rarely synonymous, yet a new Dubai restaurant seeks to change this

1&2. The sunny terrace has hints of Mexican design with oversized terracotta urns and lanterns.

3. Earthy browns are used in the mosaics and the bar furniture.

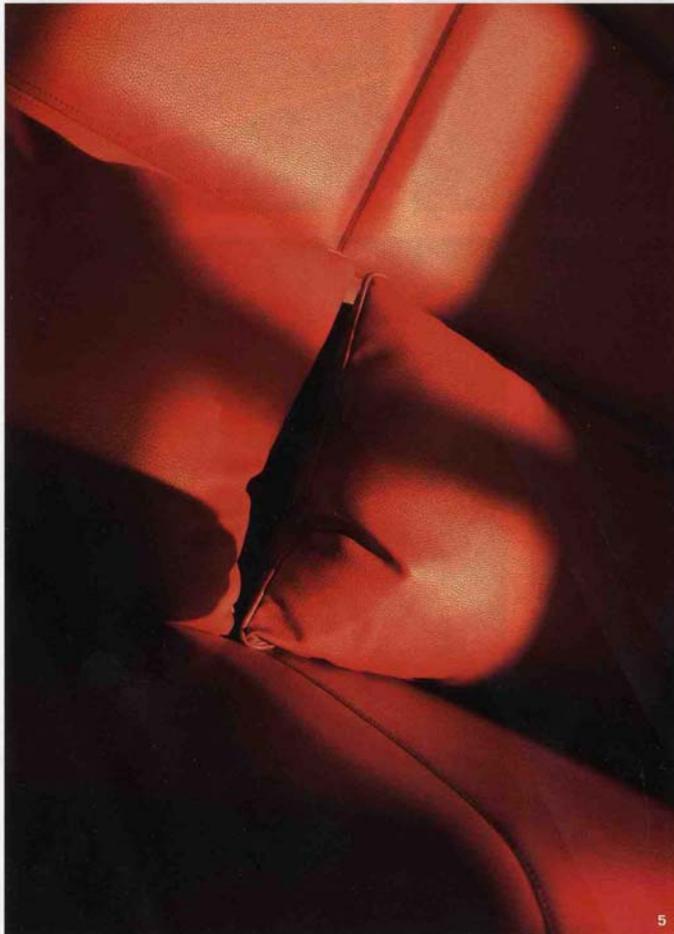
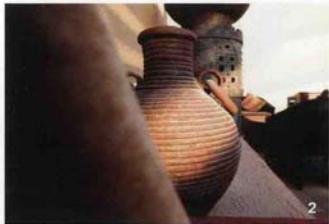
A new concept has arrived in Dubai straight from 64th Street in New York where Mexican-born chef, Richard Sandoval, has created a craze for fine dining Mexican style. A pioneer of the 'Modern Mexican' notion, his aim was to leave behind the stereotypical view of Mexican restaurants as tacky themed spaces complete with ponchos, sombrero hats and stale nachos. He aims to elevate Mexican food to the status enjoyed by French and Italian cuisine and launching Maya restaurants across the globe is the way to do it.

Sandoval met with the chosen interior designer, Habitalia, to discuss the concept, which he wanted to be essentially contemporary and elegant, but with Mexican culture and tradition. Daniele Morelli, senior designer, Habitalia, created a first draft design that still had some of the themed accoutrements of other Mexican restaurants, and so the design had to be further adapted and European-ised. The designer drew inspiration from his design of Mezzanine at Grosvenor House where tradition fuses with modern lines and sleek interiors.

Habitalia was started in 1976 in Dubai by Mariano Bertelli, who then extended the brand into Studitalia, the contracting and project managing arm of Habitalia. Mariano's son, Massimo Bertelli, managing partner, Studitalia Dubai described the stages of designing Maya Dubai: "Firstly we met with Richard Sandoval and he explained the concept to us. He gave us catalogues and books on everything from the architecture of traditional fincas to very modern designs for inspiration. We wanted to create a sense of contrast between old and new."

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CIDMAYARESTAURANT



The design is not typical. We have tried to give accent features a hint of Mexican with sculptures, Maya masks and the upholstery fabric for the furniture all inspired by Mexico." The small details are Mexican-inspired, such as the door knobs and ironmongery items on the doors. And excluding the terracotta pots that were imported direct from Mexico all other pieces of furniture, and adornments

4. A water feature has a calming effect.

5. Orange and red are used throughout as warming accent colours.

6. Traditional Tuscan artisans made all the furniture to Habitalia's designs.

7. Subtle red downlighters provide intimate lighting.

Habitalia managed this by making the core design modern, with glass and bright colours, and then injected the Latin American influence into the design subtly. Bertelli explains: "The design is

not typical. We have tried to give accent features a hint of Mexican with sculptures, Maya masks and the upholstery fabric for the furniture all inspired by Mexico." The small details are Mexican-

inspired, such as the door knobs and ironmongery items on the doors. And excluding the terracotta pots that were imported direct from Mexico all other pieces of furniture, and adornments

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- 8. The orange bar is a nod to the Latino love of vibrancy.
- 9. Bright whites form the basic colour scheme.
- 10. Wooden gazebo slats lie over the exterior terrace.
- 11. The private dining room is simple and unthemed.
- 12. The carved doors are inspired by Mexican carpentry.
- 13. The beachfront location has inspired the use of rattan furniture on the terrace.

were custom designed by Habitalla and manufactured in Italy by small independent artisans in Tuscany.

The chosen lighting has a warm orange tint, and the large circular bronze

chandelier was a Habitalla design made in Italy, and provides a focal point.

"By staying away from readymade furniture and existing designs and suppliers and instead commissioning

independent Italian craftsmen to make our designs a reality, we are creating something exciting, something new. Where we can, we try to do something unique," Bertelli says.