

WEST KOWLOON

CAFÉ IGUANA

★★★★

Mexican. Roo4, Civic Square, 3/F, Elements, 1 Austin Rd. West, West Kowloon, 2196-8733

This fun addition to Elements Mall does modern Mexican. Decked out in vibrant oranges, reds and lime greens, there's a friendly vibe that practically orders you to grab a couple of margaritas and slide into one of the comfy red booths. Expect contemporary Tex-Mex such as nachos with melted asadero cheese, and chili con carne cooked with spicy red peppers. The tender steak flank fajitas arrive dramatically on a hot skillet with four small pots for condiments and a pull-out drawer for tortillas.

Daily 10am-1:30am. \$\$

EL POMPOSO

★★★★

Spanish tapas. Roo9, Civic Square, 3/F, Elements, 1 Austin Rd. West, West Kowloon, 2196-8123

As a tapas restaurant with simple décor, the concept at El Pomposo is not particularly original but the food is great and the service friendly and attentive. As a result it's a hit with anyone who ventures out to the mega-mall in search of fine dining. We decided against the sangria and went with the rosé, which was aromatic without being overpowering. At the end of the night, we were pretty full and a little tipsy—everything a great tapas night out should be.

Sun-Thu noon-midnight, Fri-Sat noon-1am. \$\$-\$\$\$

FIRE

★★★★

Australasian. 1/F, W Hotel, 1 Austin Rd. West, Tsim Sha Tsui, 3717-2848

The W Hotel restaurants pride themselves on top-notch food and wonderful service with a touch of playfulness, and we expected Fire to be no different. But while we appreciated the innovative dishes, we were rather let down by the experience. "Essence of pigeon" turned out to be a consommé served in a teapot, with jasmine leaves that created a refreshing contrast to the otherwise strong, pigeony taste. The bouillabaisse-esque stew with black cod didn't fare as well. But the main letdown was the inexperienced staff who by the end of the night seemed to be itching for us to leave.

Mon-Fri noon-2pm, Mon-Sat 6pm-11pm. \$\$\$\$



INANIWA UDON-NABE

★★★★

Japanese Udon. 2002, 2/F, Elements, 1 Austin Rd. West, West Kowloon, 2196-8989

Basic dishes such as noodles are often the hardest to get right. But when they're good, they can really become something special, such as at this udon restaurant. They offer handmade Sato Yosuke udon from Akita, Japan. Try the inaniwa udon with mentaiko, the cold udon with hot iwate duck dressing, or the Hokkaido shiretoko chicken hot pot and hot spring egg salad.

Daily noon-3:30pm, 6pm-10:30pm. \$

JOIA

★★★★

Northern Italian. Roo10, Civic Square, 3/F, Elements, 1 Austin Rd. West, West Kowloon, 2382-2323

This is a nice new space at Elements—light and airy, with a delightful décor of white and beige woods. We ordered squid ink risotto with scallops and an extremely chewy bottarga (tuna roe pouch). Though a bit tough, the rice held the full flavor of the broth—which was amazing. The sea bass infused with lemon and lavender was enjoyable.

Daily noon-11pm. \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

KITCHEN

★★★★

International. 6/F, W Hotel, 1 Austin Rd. West, West Kowloon, 3717-2299

In any other hotel, Kitchen would be known as the coffee shop. In the achingly cool W Hotel however, it's the informal dining area where they serve comfort food with a twist. The

usual "coffee shop" suspects are all present: burgers, sandwiches, pizzas and Hainan chicken rice. There are also the "comfort food reinterpreted" dishes: lobster tacos, chicken confit and Thai chicken burgers. The confit is a particular delight, being much lighter than the duck version.

Daily 6:30am-11pm. \$\$

OLIVE

★★★★

Middle-Eastern. Roo8, Civic Square, 3/F, Elements, 1 Austin Rd. West, West Kowloon, 2810-8585

We happily polished off the babaganoush and a basket of warm and fluffy jou jou bread from the mezza platter. Only afterwards did we realize just how big the mains were. On top of the size, the food was incredibly rich and heavy, and we were stuffed before we had finished half our meal. Don't get us wrong though—the food was fantastic. The vegetarian mousakka was delicious and the eggplant and pumpkin gave the dish an almost meat-like texture. Both the rib-eye and the pistachio and black pepper lamb loin were stunning—the meat soaked up all the beautiful flavors of Middle Eastern spices and marinades and the beef and lamb were cooked to a perfect, tender juiciness. Though we were way past full, we soldiered on and ordered dessert. The galaktoboureko (custard wrapped in fatty filo pastry) turned out to be surprisingly light and refreshing, especially when paired with the yogurt sorbet.

Daily noon-3pm, 6pm-11:30pm. \$\$