

MOMO IN THE SOUKS

MEET THE STAFF AT BEIRUT'S NEWEST MOST-TALKED-ABOUT VENUE

Varia Dellalian
22, bartender

'The Momo Special Royal is my favourite cocktail to make. It's a vodka mojito with a splash of fresh apple and champagne'

Yecine Boudchicha
36, head sommelier

'Lebanese wine is really very underrated and winemakers create surprising blends. My best discovery so far is Domaine De Baal'

Naji Saad
29, bartender

'I'm from a little village called Marjaba. It's not crazy like Beirut but that's why I love this city – the people here are incredible'

Rania Abboud
34, manager

'We're a family here – everyone from the DJ to the mixologists creates the right vibe. There is nowhere in Lebanon like this'

Faycal Hedroug
28, pastry chef

'I used to work with Pierre Gagnaire at Sketch in London, so I had to come to Beirut. Besides, Mourad is my uncle!'

BEIRUT IS EASILY THE HIPPEST CITY in the Middle East and its credentials have just been further strengthened by the arrival of Momo in the Souks. It's the newest venture from Algerian restaurateur Mourad Mazouz, the bon viveur behind London's ever-so-fashionable eateries Momo and Sketch, not to mention a handful of casbah-chic joints in Paris. In Beirut he teamed up with French architect and interior designer Annabel Kassar to create a café-bar and restaurant on the first floor of a unit in the Jewellery Souk. Once patrons have figured out how to get in (the main door is operated by a hidden floor sensor) they're presented with a luscious vision of deep reds and glitz, with plump Moroccan footstools and custom-made cubist couches; the bar area leads through to a Venetian-inspired fine-dining French-Moroccan restaurant and a garden terrace. 'I asked myself,' says Mazouz 'if Yves Saint-Laurent was moving to Beirut, how would he do his interiors? And that is how Momo turned out.'

And why the long leap from Paris and London? 'I've been coming to Beirut for 20 years,' he says. 'My children are half-Lebanese, and I love this city – it is a place where everything seems possible.'

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