

# Restaurant Reviews

## Circuit Food 1992

The general standard of out-of-town food continues to rise as the Ryde College of Catering churns out first-class technicians who can "read" food, as well as a few with real imagination and flair. They go west, looking for jobs or their own sites and we all benefit. Having said that, there are some disappointments.

The Cellar Bistro in Tamworth has gone way off. The Power House, also in the City of Light and Country Music, is not what it was: the hearty pies are gone and the crumbed brains with aioli, so distinguished in 1991, were pre-cooked frozen and dry when I got them this time. The place is still fair enough, but too pricey for its present standard.

In Wagga the Pavilion Motor Inn has the best room-service menu and quality in the State. I mention in particular the Singapore Stir Fry - prawns, beef, pork and chicken pieces, lots of capsicum and onion and enough chilli, all in light rice and with teriyaki sauce. This made a lovely Sunday supper in front of the television with *Rumpole*.

The Rocks in Byron Bay has changed chef (he went over the road to the new Beach Hotel where he does super fast food but the restaurant isn't much) and is different but still very, very good. Snapper fillets with Tim Clarke's special batter and chips and one of their excellent mixed salads made a great meal. The Supreme Court and the Compensation Court were both in the area the same week and the Cape Mentelle ran out.

But the Ringmaster's award for the Circuit Meal of the Year goes to the George & Dragon in East Maitland. This is a restaurant and guesthouse in an old and brilliantly restored hotel building circa 1845. We checked in about 6 pm to a large well-appointed high-ceilinged room with no phone and no television, so we read and held hands for an hour or so with a couple of Cascade Stouts for company.

The dining room is quiet and elegant with room between the tables. The service left nothing to be desired. A Gin Dry Martini straight up with an olive and no twist was James Bond standard and the Whisky Sour, *real* lemon juice, good Scotch, egg-white and no maraschino, was absolutely correct.

The entrées were Lobster Feullette and Lamb Kidneys. (No, I am not in a rut: I had the lobster). The lobster was sliced in a fan shape and served between a puff pastry shell in a creamy leek sauce with dill garnish. It was fresh, tender and delicious. The kidneys were sliced, cooked lightning fast and served in a grainy mustard and red wine sauce. Yum.

For mains, the party of the second part had Squab with Morels, locally grown "wild" mushrooms in a brown sauce. The squab was a little bit chewy but otherwise excellent. I had oxtail. It came in three excellent knuckles, with just its own gravy and a fine Julienne of carrot and celery with chives sprinkled on top. It looked fabulous for a moment, and then the meat fell off the bones at the touch of a fork. It is rare for me to think oxtail as good as I make myself, but this certainly raised the standard.

The vegetables need their own paragraph: potatoes parboiled, peeled and cubed then baked in cream to just a tinge of brown on top. A provincial touch of perfection. Broccoli, carrot and snow peas steamed or microwaved to al dente and the

butter just waved at them provided fun and fibre.

A Margaret River Riesling in a half bottle and one of those four-number Lindemans Hunter River Reds of about 1984 just slid along nicely with it all.

No sweets thank you; although they looked good, we were done.

In the morning, breakfast is self-serve. Orange juice is in the fridge. A huge bowl of mixed fruit is on the bench of the nicely appointed and spotlessly clean kitchen. Muesli and commercial cereals in packets, breads and muffins are laid out for choice. There are eggs if you want to cook them, but fruit, toast and Vegemite did us. Quality coffee, and a plunger machine and *real* milk to warm up, left us full of fight for the long drive north.

You'll need to book, especially if you want to stay, and only two rooms have an en suite. The bath is slippery in the end room, so use the rubber mat with its suction pads in gear!

□ John Coombs

*The George & Dragon*  
48 Melbourne Street  
East Maitland NSW 2323  
Phone: (049) 33 7272

## Circuit Food Part Two: Papua New Guinea

Well, hardly circuit, but only four hours to Port Moresby and, acting as Counsel Assisting to Graham Ellis, felt more like coming home than going overseas.

PNG turns out to be a food perve's delight. Fresh fruit, salads and vegetables abound, with the sweetest pineapples and the biggest passionfruit leading the pack. The salad bar and buffet at the Islander is probably the best lunch: a "national" daily smorgasbord - Mexican, Indian, French and so on, and the salads varied and fresh.

The big surprise was the departure lounge at the Gateway which serves the best pizza (no, not in LA, not in Tuscany, in Port Moresby). The Taal is spicy with pepperoni, salami, zucchini, capsicum and onion and a dash of Worcestershire sauce on a crisp but thick enough base, a *fresh* tomato sauce and not too cheesy. With a glass tankard of ice-cold South Pacific draught it was superb. The other half was a Stromboli, a vegetarian combination with fresh zucchini, eggplant, capsicum, onion, tomato pieces and lots of garlic. Likewise yummy.

The Japanese Steakhouse, where the table is the hot plate for rapid frying of superb seafood, steak, chicken and the rice with egg and onion. The is done with flair and style and provides a floor show while your mouth waters.

The crocodile fillets and the grilled and boned half chicken and the fettuccine with seafood from the Gateway room service (you can't miss *Columbo*, and the ads in Pidgin are entertainment, not irritant) deserve honourable mention.

But the award must go to *Agnes' Cooking Pot* where the proprietor and maître d is Luke Lukas, previously the world's most overworked electoral commissioner.

He serves a daily Dutch special, a range of Indonesian dishes and Filipino delights. Everything is good, so we kept going back like a muslim to Mecca. The entrée I liked best was Bitter Ballan, Dutch crumbed balls of a veal ragout served with German mustard. The party of the third part had Indonesian-style spring rolls with seafood and lots of vegetables, which were crisp and delicious.

On our first visit we ordered Gado Gado as an entrée. It is a *big* main course, and absolutely superb. Traditional salad and vegetables, including carrot, lettuce, zucchini, cauliflower, steamed and served with a freshly-made spicy peanut and chilli sauce. It was garnished with an elephant's dandruff style fried noodles and slices of hard-boiled egg. The presentation was elegant, the steaming timed perfectly for each vegetable. The lettuce was still crisp and the cauliflower cooked enough. Not easy! We all loved it.

The bitan goreng, fried noodles with prawns, chicken, chilli, vegetables and a fried egg on top was crispy and delicious.

A Saturday special is Rosboef, roasted fillet, nice and rare, with baked potatoes, a thick gravy and delicious green beans with garlic.

For Friday, the Capucijners met Spek, brown beans topped with finely chopped onions, small cubes of bacon with vinegar and pepper, hot potatoes and gravy is definitely a *no* entrée and *no* sweets - just a main course, thanks - but excellent too.

A culinary adventure. Mention my name to Luke if you go in: he'll give you all the best gossip! ☐ John Coombs

## Childcare.

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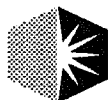
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## Pussyfooting

(ICAC - Cmr Beazley QC)

Mr Greenwood: "You don't have a copy of this?"

Mr Campbell: "I don't think I do."

Mr Greenwood: "I'm surprised. You see for the Saturday 14 July there's a notation of 'Meeting Serge 4 pm?' "—" That says 'Ring' ".

"'Ring', does it, 'Serge 6 pm', right, thank you. The little Felix the cat sticker appears from time to time, does that have any significance?" "—" It's a reminder to worm my cat."

"You have no recollection of ringing Mr Bogeholz on that Saturday afternoon?" "—" No, I don't."

"Or what you might have spoken about?" "—" No, I don't. "☐

## Like the Nose on Your face

Coram: Court of Appeal: Gleeson CJ, Kirby P, Meagher J hearing an appeal from Young J concerning the construction of a clause giving a bank the right to call upon a party to provide security for a debt.

Gleeson CJ delivered an ex tempore judgement dismissing the appeal.

Kirby P said: "I agree".

Meagher JA said (inter alia): "I dissent. In my view it is clear beyond argument that this appeal should succeed."

(*Fountain & Anor v Bank of America National Trust & Savings Assoc* 23 October 1992)