

Restaurant Reviews

Circuit Food 1993

No long-term discussion of Circuit Food can properly omit the pies of Yackandandah. On the Monday of the Albury sittings I had an early Motion and was free, by 12 noon, for the day.

The party of the third part and I borrowed a car and drove through a stunning Autumn day, adorned with the red and golden leaves of elms, tobacco and other assorted deciduous trees, to the birthplace of Isaac Isaacs in the north of Victoria.

The town is picturesque and old, with craft shops, antiques and Mel Gibson's pub, unspoilt by any sign of his spending money on it! The piece-de-resistance is the Bakery. Its 19th century baker's oven produces steak plain, steak and onion, steak and mushroom pies and big sausage rolls. The fillings are juicy, meaty and full of flavour, but best of all is the pastry. The pie bases are a thick and crumbly fresh short pastry with flaky pastry on top. Worth the trip even if the drive wasn't lovely!

Albury food is adequate. In the Carlton Hotel/Motel (the old Travelodge) the dining room is fine if you aim for the simpler dishes. The steaks, char grilled, are first class and they can cook Bernaise sauce and good chips. There is a fair Italian and a fair Spanish and the Aussie Roast at the Commercial Club is as advertised. Out of town, about 35 minutes, is "The House" at Mount Prior, which overlooks the Murray River and is serving excellent food and wine. Home-baked bread and paté is free while you choose. The goats' cheese salad was a delicious entrée and the duck was perfectly crisp and moist, not a bit oily. The veal pie with truffles stopped me, but the other party got to kiwi fruit shortcake with creme Anglais and loved it.

Tamworth hasn't improved much since last year, although the "Jumbuk Cottage" is innovative and serves buffalo, crocodile and 'roo steaks. At the Power House Monty's fine dining is not so fine, pretentious and expensive. The fast food café is better, and very varied. The "Dragon Palace" is the best Chinese, with steamed dim sim, barbequed quail and deep fried duck with lemon sauce their best offerings.

In Byron Bay "The Rocks" maintains its very high standards and the "Oh Delhi" is producing wonderful Indian food. Try the Masala Dosa, a delicious lentil pancake with potato and onion curry. The "Bikie Fish Café" in Lismore serves fabulous fresh fish, fried, with great chips for \$7.00 a serve. "Buy beer next door", the man says.

But the Ringmaster's Award for the Year goes to the Hermitage Restaurant at the "Hunter Resort" in the Hunter River Valley; close enough to Newcastle and on the way to all points north, so a valid circuit food experience. The chefs are a pair, brother and sister I think. The young man trained with Neil Perry at the Rockpool, the woman with Paul Merrony! The lentil, chorizo and spinach soup was absolutely delicious. The party of the fourth part had chargrilled blue swimmer crab in a ginger butter and chilli sauce and the third party's entrée was octopus grilled and served with a basil hollandaise sauce. The chargrilled rump with braised borlotti beans, steamed vegetable in a separate bowl, perfectly cooked, and good

chips, was my main, and superb. The others were "today's special" a lamb curry with papadams, spicy tender and delicious, and roasted Atlantic salmon, served with avocado, salsa and dressed with lemon and olive oil. The fish was *just* cooked and melted in the mouth.

An icecream cake with layers of blackberry ice cream, raspberry sorbet and boysenberry ripple ice cream was too tempting by far, and the second irresistible dessert was a scrumptious fig shortbread. All their own wines by the glass and excellent. They also serve a wide range of other wines and I loved the Calais Estate Sauterne (1991) with the sweet.

There was hot competition, but this was the Meal of the Year. □

John Coombs QC

Melbourne is a food perv's paradise, and not just the fancy places. The fast food, the cheap cafés, the pub food, are all good.

For fabulous early morning coffee, foccaccia with herb and garlic and a daily lunch special that is fast, cheap and good (veal knuckle and bottle of red \$15.00!) try "Nick's Spaghetti Bar" in King just up from Lonsdale. Noisy but fun.

Just across the road is an upmarket brasserie called "Kay's on King". Definitely lunch only, it dies at dusk. I tried it twice; once with Richard Stanley and once with "Stick" Collis, both Victorian Silks who know food. The venison sausages, home made, just with potato salad, were wonderful. They were part of a sausage and Yarra Ridge pinot noir promotion and as good a way to deal with being not reached Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday as there is! Next time we "celebrated" a hung jury with asparagus vinaigrette and a fabulous oxtail and crunchy fresh vegetables and good chips to share and some St Hallett's "Old Block" shiraz.

We sampled Mietta's, which is good, *fancy* and dear and everybody has already read about it. Try the "Greek Deli & Taverna" in South Yarra which is noisy, fast, cheap, and with cheerful cheeky waiters. The best Greek was the set menu (what you get is what's on!) at "Vasilis Greek Tavern" in Abbotsford. Taramasalata and tzatziki with crunchy bread, pan-fried crumbed sardines, grilled octopus, tender and superb, crunchy crispy lamb on skewers, salad, and more I can't remember. It just kept coming! We had my daughter, my son-in-law, Annette and I and the three grandchildren and the whole lot, including booze, cost \$114.00!!

The "Continental Café" in Greville Street, Prahran, is well worth a Sunday lunch and we also enjoyed "Bortolotto's" in St Kilda, another noisy bistro with good Italian food. Try the garfish, the homemade ravioli and the tripe! The latter was stewed long and slow with onions, tomato, garlic, carrots, borlotti beans and served with an orange brick of polenta, absolutely correct.

But the Ringmaster chooses "La Chaumiére", a little French BYO for the Circuit Food (II) Award. "Stick" Collis recommended it and we hit it twice. The specialities of the house were terrific! French onion soup, snails, duck livers,

Knocking Around

crispy roast duck, rabbit stew, pepper steak and creme brulée, all very, very good. I especially liked the rabbit - cooked long and slow with vegetables in red wine so the meat stayed juicy, not dry as rabbit often is. The pepper steak was rare and thick and sitting in a hot puddle of tangy pepper sauce. Nothing in the before and afters was less than very good. Service quick and efficient and not *too* Gallic!

I would go a third time with great pleasure.

I cannot tell you how good it was to get home after Melbourne, Sri Lanka and Hobart. Annette and I cooked a special meal that I would like to share with you.

We fried finely chopped onion, carrot, parsnip, garlic and celery. Then we browned 4 thick-cut pieces of veal shank, put the lot in a veal and chicken stock (homemade) with 500 grams of peeled, but not pipped, tomatoes. We bubbled this lot away until the meat was just about falling from the bone.

We served this with broad beans cooked with finely chopped onion and garlic in the microwave and with *desirée* potatoes just microwaved.

A bottle of Gil Walquhist's Botobolar Shiraz (1990) made this better than *any* circuit meal! □

John Coombs QC

Lunch on the Run

In these tight financial times more and more barristers can be seen eating at the cheaper places around town. Not too far away is the "Taco Tandoori" where the "taste of Mexico and India is right here in Sydney". The proprietor, Helal, offers a variety of foods which can be eaten in the nearby open eating areas.

On the occasion when I visited his eatery again I was in the middle of a Family Law conference and needed a break. My instructing solicitor and I walked down to Helal's shop where he made us a terrific lunch comprising Butter Chicken which has a mild curry flavour, Kashmiri Beef, again of a mild flavour, and Lamb Vindaloo, which was quite hot. These were served with saffron rice, known as Basmati.

We followed this up with Mango Lassi, a mixture of rose water, yoghurt and sugar.

As it was both important and traditional that I shout, I was delighted when the bill came to under \$20.00!

For a quick taste of India and Mexico, the Taco Tandoori in the Hunter Connection Arcade is well recommended. □

Gary McIlwaine

"Lunches O'Brien"

Taco Tandoori

Shop F4-5 Hunter Connection Arcade

7-13 Hunter Street

Sydney Telephone 233 1689

Q. I think you said in evidence today that that occurred after he got out of the vehicle?

A. Yes.

Q. I suggest to you that you knocked Mr Fitzgerald unconscious with your police baton?

A. At no time was he unconscious. I certainly knocked him, but at no time was he unconscious.

A. You have been equivocal about where you actually hit him with the baton, haven't you?

A. Yes, I agree with that, yes.

Q. You weren't equivocal when you were giving your report to the Internal Affairs Branch, were you?

A. I don't know, I haven't read the report at the moment, now.

Q. Didn't you say - you will find it on the second page of your report - "I then drew my baton and struck him with it about the arms and legs"?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. That's what you said?

A. Yes.

Q. Was that the truth?

A. Yes.

Q. "During this Fitzgerald attempted to grab the baton from me and then I struck him about the legs and he fell to the ground"?

A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Were you trying to create the impression that his falling to the ground was as a result of your administering blows to his legs?

A. I wasn't trying to create any impression. I was simply telling whoever it was, the inspector, in the report, to the best of my knowledge, what happened. I didn't try and create any impressions at all. In the heat of the thing when you aim at somebody's arm and he moves, it's a possibility that you could hit him somewhere else. It's a possibility. You certainly don't aim to do that or try to do that.

Q. Is it a possibility that he threw the left side of his head violently against your stationary baton?

A. I've already said that that's a possibility, yes. It is also a possibility that he received that injury in a fight that he had had earlier on.

HIS HONOUR: Just a moment.

Q. Did you listen to that question that was asked of you? (Last question read out)

A. Oh, I'm sorry, I beg your pardon, sir. That is not a possibility. What I thought you said was is it a possibility that he threw himself and the baton came into contact. I beg your pardon, sir.

(*Leo Fitzgerald v Hayllar Trading Pty Ltd trading as Hayllar and Howe Haulage. Supreme Court of NSW*)