

mx Nosh



TASTY MORSELS

TRY THIS



HEY, BABYCAKES

The Babycakes Noel range (above) is now available at David Jones and Chadstone Food halls. Try the gingerbread angel – spicy cinnamon and gingerbread biscuit with a hint of clove. Or the Noel Shortbread – buttery vanilla bean shortbread letters with polkadot icing. www.babycakesbydesign.com.au

IT'S PROGRESS

Don't miss the Melbourne Central progressive dinner next Monday starting at the Hush Bar at 6pm. It's \$75 for City Rewards members and \$85 for non-members. Ph: 1300 857 787.

CHEF COURSES

Tonight at The Boathouse, get cooking with chef Gary Mehigan and enjoy a three-course meal for \$75. Ph: 9375 2456.

MOZZIE MARINADE

If you buy a Nando's peri-peri sauce or marinade, you'll also be supporting One Net One Life, a mission to distribute mosquito nets to pregnant mothers and children in Africa to prevent the spread of malaria.

GAS MARKET

The last Gasworks farmers' market for 2007 is Saturday December 15 from 8.30am to 1pm. Gasworks Arts Park, Cnr Pickles and Graham Sts, Albert Park. See www.gasworks.org.au

– Something happening in Melbourne food and wine? Let us know at huntm@mxnet.com.au



Picture: ANDREW MACCOLL

15.5/20

SLOANEY PONY 1 Crockford St - Port Melbourne Ph: 9645 2503

I've driven past the grungy facade of Fountain Inn many times without being tempted in.

Then whispers that the chef who put the Montague on the map had moved there meant it deserved a visit.

Outside may not have changed, but inside it's all spruced up with the restaurant at the rear shielded by antique iron gates.

It's a spacious and comfortable dining space that understates the food that emanates from the kitchen.

■ Challenges met

Dishes have simple titles and a short description, but staff proudly help with details.

After ordering, a small amuse bouche of bitter melon wrapped in wagyu bresaola arrives, pretty on the plate sprinkled with chive petals – a delightful wake-up for the palate.

A rabbit consomme provides rare slices of fillet and a firm pasta tortellini of rabbit in a fragrant broth – delicious.

"Het Potje" presents veal sweetbread with mushrooms, an offal eater's dream that's small enough not to kill the appetite.

A chicken wing and scallop salad introduces some Asian flavours; the

boned wing crisp and sweet sitting, with the scallops, on somen noodles mixed with jellyfish (simply a textural component).

It may sound challenging, but the chef nails it – a dish I'd love as a quick lunch any day.

Whole steamed Murray cod is sweet, white flesh with hints of ginger and chive, the flowers adding colour . . . unfussed fish at its best.

Poached veal shows a more rustic bent from the kitchen, the lentils, morels and walnuts sweet and earthy.

This also had a small pasta dumpling that repeated the coarse texture.

I probably prefer it less al dente, but this is a small gripe when so much hits the target.

■ Short and sweet

An excellent cheese selection seems too much after all we've just consumed.

The bitter orange trifle is a loose deconstruction that needs to be eaten quickly (as if that's a problem) and the chocolate cardamom tart's richness is cut by the citrus spice and its delicate oolong sorbet.

As if this is not enough, a plate of petit fours arrives with coffee.

The wine list has a good range, lacking little.

Some judicious selections by the glass make matching with food easy.

■ Music for the senses

Sunday night sees live band, Big and Horny, fill the place with music and dancing, reminding us that the Pony is a pub after all, and a rather Sloaney one.

The restaurant is open to the bar, but that's all the more fun if you're in the mood and want to dine while the place parties.

The rest of the time it's a refined dining experience with creative food that combines taste, texture and balance in each dish.

Friendly but professional and informed service makes it a treat.

I'm tempted (and would love) to score it higher, but that would bend the boundaries if it was transported to an elegant restaurant space.

And I love it like it is.

Price is \$60 a person. Visit www.sloaneypony.com

CHRISTOPHER HAYES
Christopher Hayes is principal of Australia's food and wine guide, Eat & Drink. www.eatanddrink.com.au

Left overs



Take these home for later

Dr Booze

From humble beginnings, Merv and Judy Lange have been producing wines in Frankland River for 30 years. With similar climatic conditions to Bordeaux, vine selection has been paramount to the success of this family-owned vineyard. Consistently recognised for quality under the Black Label range, they now produce a White Label selection for the more budget conscious. The 2006 semillon/sauvignon blanc blend is a well-crafted wine that sparkles in the glass like a blast of midday sun. The nose and palate are fresh and appealing with a dash of lemon zing, a hint of fruit sugars in the mid palate and a clean acidic finish. Drink with fresh, delicate food or simply sip well chilled with friends. RRP: \$11-13.

HENRY LIVINGSTONE
sommelier

To feature wines here or for more information, contact drbooze@netspace.net.au

Chef Chat

I love rhubarb, especially with strawberries; it sings of summer, particularly when served with lashings of cream or ice cream – delicious. We all know you can only eat the stalks of the rhubarb, so what's wrong with the leaves and why are they poisonous?

Rhubarb leaves, like other green leafy vegetables such as spinach, chard and cabbage, contain oxalic acid. The difference with rhubarb leaves is the level of oxalic acid is dangerously high. This acid is also found in potatoes and peas, but don't panic, they are safe. The side effects, however, of too much of this chemical in the diet can lead to kidney stones and osteoporosis because the acid bonds with calcium and leaches it from the body.

If you have ever noticed having fuzzy teeth after eating spinach or rhubarb, that's oxalic acid giving you that strange, mouth-puckering feel. So just in case you ever find anyone sitting in the veggie patch chomping on a pile of rhubarb leaves, the symptoms of poisoning will include burning in the mouth and throat, cardiovascular collapse, difficulty breathing, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

At this time of the year similar effects in men may also be brought on by Christmas shopping – so beware!

GARY MEHIGAN
chef, proprietor
Fenix, The Boathouse

What's Up

Chilli Padi in Menzies Alley in the city has spread its wings. Restaurant owners Li and Robert Teoh this week announced the opening of their second Chilli Padi restaurant at 267 Chapel Street, Prahran. Check it out for yourself. To book, call 9533 7022.

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