



Food Review

Ochre Restaurant
43 Shields Street
4051 0100
Open Monday to Friday for lunch and seven days for dinner.

WORDS BY TANYA BIRD

As locals we all know Ochre is something pretty special and the fact it has been serving unforgettable food for the last 15 years only proves this. Dinner at Ochre is an occasion, a chance to sit back and let the experienced team led by Craig Squire look after you. It was a busy Saturday evening when we dined but the size of the restaurant, which is nestled in the heart of Market Square on the corner of Sheridan and Shields Streets, allows you to forget about the other diners and simply enjoy the food. With its emphasis on Australian produce and wines, we were looking forward to trying some of the new offerings on Ochre's menu, which was only changed in April. We started our meals with a deliciously warm wattle seed damper loaf with a peanut oil dipping sauce and Australian-inspired dukka (\$7). To wash it down, our host for the evening and restaurant manager Suriya, recommended the innocent Bystander Pink Moscato 2006. Refreshingly light, this was the perfect start to what was going to be an amazing evening.

For our entrees the chicken and wattle seed ravioli (\$20), spanner crab smoked in paperbark and served with avocado mousse and asparagus puree (\$21) along with the crispy salt and pepper quail served with a wild lime and chilli sorbet (\$20) were the order of the day. Stunningly presented, the starters demonstrated why Ochre is one of the best restaurants in Cairns. Ochre is well-known for its expertise in cooking native fare such as crocodile and kangaroo, however what makes this restaurant so unique is its ability to deliver with fresh ingredients and take on all types of new and exciting dishes. In Ochre's case, the chef has pulled out all the stops to offer innovative and exciting food

that not only pleases but satisfies too. Onto our mains and Scott opted for the char grilled kangaroo sirloin with a quandong chilli glaze and sweet potato fritter (\$34) while I decided on the tea tree smoked grilled lamb short loin that was served with finger lime quinoa and a tomato and olive confit. I was to learn that quinoa is the new super food, which is high in protein, gluten free and contains lots of dietary fibre, magnesium and iron. Both meats were of the highest quality with melt in the mouth tenderness while the accompanying sides, were delicious and flavoursome. We also sampled the Ochre salad (\$15), with its crisp bacon, mungalli feta and sliced macadamia nuts, which was almost a meal in itself.

Dessert was always going to pose a problem, however Suriya offered to bring a tasting plate with a range of desserts for us to sample (\$14pp, min 4 people). Once again, wattle seed played a presence in the pavlova which was served with Davidson plum sorbet and macadamia biscotti. My favourite, which was the lime tart served with a basil ice cream, was refreshing while not being too sweet. Other desserts on the tasting platter included the sticky red centre date pudding, the chocolate slut which was a chocolate indulgence beyond compare and seasonal fruits.

With its new menu, Ochre is offering fresh new food with a thoroughly modern take. In saying that, the service, atmosphere and its people all go hand in hand to ensure some of the best plated food in the north. CL



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43, Spence Street, Cairns, Australia 4870 | Fully Licensed | Reservations : 4041 1422 | Tuesdays to Fridays : 11.30 - 2.30 | Tuesdays - Sundays : 6.00 pm.

