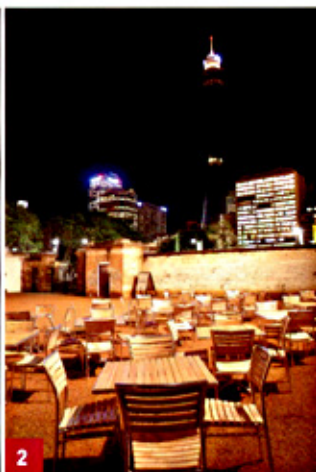


Hyde Park Barracks Café

Taleggio chicken breast & vermouth sauce

Ingredients:

4 chicken breasts, skin on
200g Taleggio cheese, cut into 4 pieces



Dining in a restaurant with historic surrounds somehow makes even a simple morsel seem somewhat regal. That's the feel of the Hyde Park Barracks Café, where the modern Australian menu with a Mediterranean twist is elevated to greater heights thanks to the venue's stunning yet subdued surrounds.

Situated in an enclave on Macquarie Street near the Hyde Park Barracks Museum, close to the Mint, and metres away from St Mary's Cathedral, the location of the café lends itself to hosting mainly corporate clients as well as tourists, with the warm intimacy of the venue making it popular for private functions. One could easily imagine a gathering for an intimate wedding here.

The Hyde Park Barracks Café has been established for 20 years, and has recently undergone a major refurbishment at the hands of new management team Melchiorre and Lorraine Saladino, giving the venue a sleek modern look among the existing sandstone walls.

Executive chef Melchiorre has been an innovator in his field since 1994. Having worked in and managed restaurants of various culinary styles, he has emerged to develop his own distinct translation of cuisine. This is evident in the changing menu, with current dishes including Taleggio cheese-stuffed chicken breast, served with pomme anna, cherry tomatoes, zucchini and Taleggio sauce, and the house cured gravlax salmon and dill crème fraiche mille feuille served with baby herb salad and salmon caviar vinaigrette.

Melchiorre has worked in Italy, with a dedicated stint in Sicily, and it shows. It gave him a chance to perfect his art in Italian and European cuisine. His fresh, distinctive ideas and passion for quality produce are translated into even the most simple of dishes.

Lorraine is the restaurant and events manager. With a long-standing, highly regarded reputation for excellence in the industry, her experience comes from managing hotels, restaurants and exclusive event venues, as well as high profile and celebrity soirées, where numbers sometimes reached up to as many as 4,000 guests.

Those who have experienced a lingering lunch with the light filtering through the large windows inside, or an afternoon tea in the warmth of the seating outside, may want to share with you the secret haunt that is Hyde Park Barracks Café. ■ **Josie Gagliano**

1. Melchiorre Saladino, executive chef

2. The outdoor seating area at Hyde Park Barracks Café

Mushroom ravioli

1 onion, finely chopped
1 clove of garlic, finely chopped
50g butter
1 tsp thyme, finely chopped
1 bay leaf
300ml dry white wine
400g button mushrooms, finely chopped
500g flat field mushrooms, finely chopped
1 egg
1 packet wonton egg sheets

Pesto vermouth sauce

200ml cream
200g eschallots, finely sliced
50g butter
50ml vermouth
200ml chicken stock
2 tbs basil pesto

For mushroom ravioli, melt butter, sauté garlic and onion until soft. Add thyme, bay leaf, white wine, salt and pepper, and reduce. Add mushrooms, cook for 30 minutes, stirring regularly. Cool mixture in fridge. On a lightly floured board, place 4 wonton wrappers. Whisk egg and brush over wonton wrappers. Place spoonful of mushroom mixture in centre. Cover with another wonton wrapper and press edges together. To cook, boil water, add ravioli and cook on a gentle heat for 10-12 minutes.

To make the pesto vermouth sauce, melt butter in a fry pan, sauté eschallots until soft. Add vermouth and reduce. Add chicken stock and cream and reduce. Strain sauce, season and mix in pesto.

Stuff chicken breasts with Taleggio cheese, wrapping each breast in cling wrap. Poach in water, while in cling wrap, for 8 minutes. Remove from water, unwrap. Heat 1 tablespoon of butter and 2 tablespoons of oil in fry pan. Add chicken and cook until golden brown on each side.

[Serves 4]