

dishitup

Simon Thomsen shares his favourite dining moments of the month.

Photography Petrina Tinslay

Confit of shaved baby squid at Quay

Chef Peter Gilmore is an unabashed sensualist, bringing seductive textures to whatever he cooks. And his four-course dinner menu is one of spellbinding combinations (\$145). You might begin with a clear conscience, trying sustainably fished Australian shark fin (a by-product of flake caught for fish and chips), followed by this pretty blend of ginger-scented confit squid and octopus on a soft pillow of garlicky custard and ringed by shaved organic radish. It's decorated with tiny garlic chive flowers and native violets, before a shallow pool of roasted squid and seaweed consommé is poured over the top. Your goosebumps on tasting it are the surprise extra.

Quay, Upper Level, Overseas Passenger Terminal, West Circular Quay, The Rocks. Phone: 9251 5600.



Terrine of smoked ham hock and brawn at Burlington Bar and Dining

Matt Kemp of Randwick two-hatter Restaurant Balzac has crossed the bridge to open a bistro to show off his clever yet jovial approach to old-school British cooking with a dash of Mediterranean derring-do. Kemp shows plenty of brains in his brawn served as a terrine (\$12/\$18), a remarkable dish that encases sweet, salty and smoky pig's trotter, hock and cheek in a lush, lemony jelly, presented beside a remoulade topped with crunchy slivers of crumbed pig's ear. His Eton mess (\$12) is a corker too. Most dishes come in entree and main sizes, wine from the small global list is available by the glass or bottle – and it's all terrific value.

Burlington Bar and Dining, 6 Burlington Street, Crows Nest. Phone: 9439 7888.



Beef cheeks at Mad Cow

You'd almost wish the winter lasted longer as a good excuse to tuck into hearty, simple dishes such as this. Mad Cow is a steakhouse, one of nine dining options in Ivy, the sleek and witty new adult drinking playground created by young Merivale tycoon Justin Hemmes. With its amusingly feminine decor it upends expectations of the typically laddish steakhouse atmosphere and the menu, overseen by est.'s Peter Doyle, is in parts, just as delicate. But dagging about with the lusciously gelatinous and gloriously soft braised beef cheeks (\$37) on a potato and parsnip puree, ringed by fresh sweet peas and baby carrots, is more our comfort zone.

Mad Cow, 1st floor, Ivy, 300 George Street, city. Phone: 9240 3000.



Chocolate baklava at Efendy

This Turkish restaurant (at the former L'Unico site) takes its name from the epithet for an old-school gentleman with a modern outlook. Efendy's approach to the spice-laden flavours of the Ottoman Empire is similarly contemporary, from an entertaining meze plate to share (choose six from the 10 daily options), to Turkish-styled weekend brunches – a lively take on Istanbul's traditional fare – in the courtyard of this charming Victorian terrace. Efendy's chocolate baklava (\$14) is the best of all worlds, naughtily layering the mousse-like chocolate between layers of fine pastry. Sour cherries soaked in Pedro Ximénez are a fabulous accompaniment, along with stretchy and intriguing ice-cream made from salep (a Turkish orchid bulb).

Efendy, 79 Elliott Street, Balmain. Phone: 9810 5466.