



Sarah Blake

INSIDER

Taste a touch of Turkey

EFENDY

79 Elliot St (cnr Darling St), Balmain
Phone: 9810 5466
Food: Modern Turkish
Why go: For stylish, original fare
in elegant surrounds
Service: Attentive

★★★★☆

Many Australians think dips, kebabs and gozleme when it comes to Turkish food. Last year's arrival in Sydney of Ottoman was our first taste of Istanbul's restaurant fare. Now, with Efendy, we have a second exponent of that previously rare find — fine Turkish food.

Expat Turk restaurateur Somer Sivrioglu bought Balmain's L'Unico six months ago and decided that, with his heritage and mainly Turkish staff, he wasn't in the best position to continue serving upscale Italian.

After a brief refit, Efendy opened late last year in a converted terrace on Darling St, just before Balmain becomes Rozelle.

A large courtyard off the street — with a small cocktail bar to the right — leads to polished floorboards and white tablecloths beneath stained-glass windows and framed photos of the Turkish countryside.

Warm, house-baked pide rolls quickly mop up a gratis plate of pleasingly spicy olive oil, studded with flakes of fresh Aegean olives, crushed walnuts, chillis, oregano and lemon.

The highlights of a shared mezze plate (\$25) are a vibrant



broad bean mash, with a cross-section of tender artichoke, and al dente asparagus spears wrapped in pasturma (cured beef).

In a vegetarian main, (patlican, \$25), crunchy yufka pastry cups a tumble of soft roasted eggplant and sweet cherry tomatoes, sharpened by goat fetta and covered in a gentle sauce of tomatoes flavoured with traditional spices, oregano and mint.

At the next table, five of six diners have ordered the same dish, Narli Ordek (\$32) — a vibrantly coloured, slow-cooked duck Maryland in a berry and pomegranate glaze.

But I can't resist a dumpling, so the slow-cooked lamb shoulder (\$28) is a must.

Meat that falls apart sits on a wonderfully flavoursome lamb broth, lifted by a burnt-chilli and mint sauce.

Thumbtack-sized manti dumplings and chickpeas are scattered across a deep plate to make a dish that is, cleverly, both slow and fresh. The menu says our baklava (\$14) is air-freighted from Antep, but Sivrioglu later explains that the cost became

prohibitive, so he began making his own.

"A labour of love, but worth it," he says of what is the best version I have tasted (it's all about how many layers of pastry — and it should never be filo, apparently).

Efendy is fully licensed, open for lunch Thursday to Sunday, dinner Monday to Saturday.

All meals are paid for and visits are unannounced.

Turkish delight: Efendy offers a true taste of Istanbul