

Stephen Downes

DINING OUT > A stylish new brasserie serves some inventive and brave cooking



FOG

142 Greville St, Prahran
Ph: 9521 3155

Checklist

Chef: Jeremy Sutphin

Open: Noon-3pm Tues-Fri; 10am-3pm Sat, Sun brunch menu; 6-11pm Tues-Sun

Parking: In street or car parks

Cards: AE, BC, DC, MC, Visa

Seats: 130

Liquor status: Licensed

Cost: About \$61 for three courses



IT TAKES a brave chef to serve a caesar salad like Fog's. What this classic should or shouldn't contain is the subject of endless debate, of course. But Fog's is a minimalist concoction that simultaneously pushes the boundaries.

I don't think I've ever been served a caesar without whole anchovies or an egg or bacon. Fog's caesar (\$14) lists anchovies, but if they were there they must have been in its very fine mayonnaise. But neither egg (apart from in the mayo) nor bacon appeared, and the dish consisted of the sauce draped over three big hearts of cos lettuces, three tasty tanned cubes that were listed as "tabasco polenta croutons" and lots of shavings of excellent reggiano cheese. All good, but a little monotonous in the eating, and the lettuces were a little too cold.

A sleek new brasserie and bar, Fog is a deep, wide room with white walls and a high white ceiling. The colour scheme is basically dark: dark-stained wood-veneered tables, dark bentwood bistro chairs, dark hardwood strip flooring, and dark bench seating along the wall, smoked mirrors above them. All this is dramatised by terrific illumination, which spotlights each table. You use excellent alloy cutlery, fine-lipped glassware and big, heavy white fabric napkins.

The list surprises. There's a corn, crab and vanilla bean soup, a ragout of beef short ribs, bone marrow and tomato chutney, a "bone-n-pork chop smoked sweet paprika" (your guess is as good as mine), and "dry aged porterhouse" with "gold" potatoes.

Mussels are used in a seafood-stew main, but they also come with vermouth and a green sauce (\$18). Smudged with a nicely oily and very herbal "salsa verde", as the list put it, about two dozen bivalves were



Pictures: NORM OORLOFF

Food

Mussels with vermouth and green sauce

Drink

T'Gallant Imogen pinot gris, \$7

The feel

Stylish new brasserie

good. A shallow sauce in the bottom of the bowl had nicely balanced sweetness and vermouth flavour. Our mains were of modest size, probably to encourage the ordering of \$8 side orders such as potatoes (mashed, chips or roasted) and green salad. Wild bar-amundi (\$32), for instance, amounted to two smallish lobes of good, cooked-through fish steamed with restrained amounts of ginger, chilli and lime. A fairly aqueous sauce largely of butter and lime juice pooled on the plate, and the fish bits leant on three stalks of broccolini. A flaccid sprig of coriander, tiny orange fish-roe spheres and candied peel of orange garnished.

Strewn with a few blackcurrants, six slices of "pan-roasted" duck breast had tender felti-

ness and were of OK flavour. They shared the plate with a fry-up of halves of small brussels sprouts mixed with a restrained amount of confit duck bits (probably from a leg). An accompanying blackcurrant sauce was fine, and a pumpkin puree extremely light and even better.

Seven desserts and a cheese plate share a separate list with three dessert wines and four sherries served by the glass.

A demi-tasse-saucer-sized cherry tart (\$15) was excellent. I liked the shrivelled fruit on top, its sweet-almond (frangipane) filling, and its well-cooked shorterust. A slick of "burnt orange" syrup and a small island of nicely salty goats' curd accompanied.

IN SUMMARY

Fog tables some inventive and brave cooking of good and higher standard. Prices are fairly high. The place itself is stylish, and the service provided by a platoon of waiters was good the night I visited. The wine list is compact, representative and overall fairly expensive, though there is some relief with bottle prices in the high \$20s and low \$30s.



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