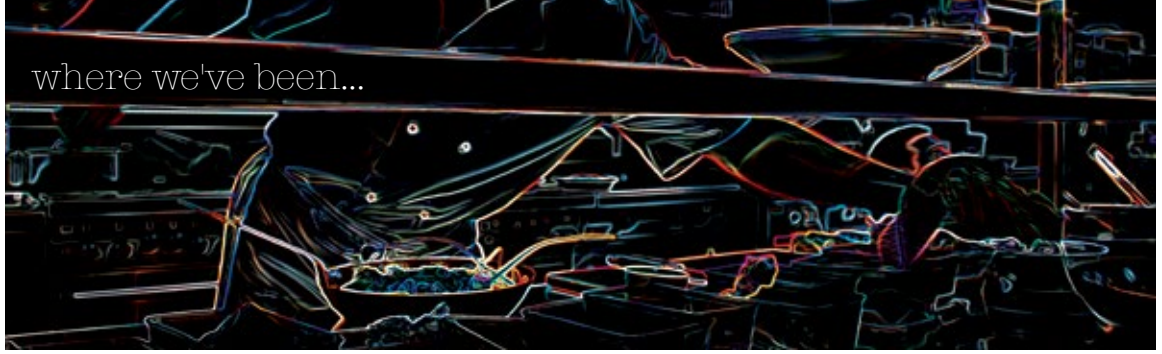


where we've been...



## **OTIS** Rydges Campbelltown

Each year around Christmas, my printer takes me out to lunch. I'm not his biggest account - not by a long shot, but it's nice to be appreciated. Wayne is a local, he loves the magazine and we get along very well. I'm sure that is the real reason we go to lunch each year.

We missed Christmas this year, and then January too. We ended up having lunch early in February. Wayne's wife Judy joined us. It was a lovely long lunch chatting about all sorts of stuff.

Rydges OTIS Bar is a beautiful place to be. It has a casual opulence that's hard to describe. I don't think any venue in Campbelltown could ever be truly opulent. There's a degree of pretence associated with opulence that we just can't abide, so we make our own version. OTIS is our version. Gorgeously appointed and brilliantly designed, the space is close to perfect - for us. Actually, I think OTIS would attract a similar vibe if it was in the city. Maybe it was intentional - if so Scott Carver nailed it. OTIS is certainly a place I love to be.

We were shown to our table in the restaurant space and began our catch up chat. The room was about half full, pretty good for Wednesday lunch. The menu is big and it takes some time to work through. So many options. I had seen a dish via a Facebook post that grabbed my attention: Pan fried King George Whiting Fillet with prawn gnocchi, wakame, scorched baby corn, pearl mushrooms and dashi broth. There it was on the menu. Wayne

coincidentally chose the same dish. He also ordered an entree, so I thought I had better too. "Rude not to," I smiled to myself. "Half a dozen Sydney Rock Oysters please."

Judy wanted a burger. "You can't just order a burger," Wayne complained in a way only a husband can. "That's what I want," Judy insisted in a way only a wife can. Conversation over. Judy sat back in her chair with a contented smile. She had to sit through our entrees so she would be ready to eat when her burger arrived. My oysters were superb and my chilled glass of Ross Hill Pinnacle Pinot Gris from Orange was loving them too. Wayne raved about the Spice-Rubbed Slow Cooked Pork Belly with smoky chipotle sauce, apple and celeriac salad. It looked spectacular on the plate. His ever reliable Shaw Smith Sauvignon Blanc went along for the ride.

The mains arrived and the juxtaposition became apparent. A modern bistro style burger and fries on the same table as two beautifully presented fine dine dishes. Judy absolutely loved her burger. What else matters! "I only planned to eat half of it," she laughed looking at the cleared plate. "I couldn't stop." I explained that OTIS kitchen source their meat directly from Shottlanders Farm at Gerringong on the South Coast. "The meat is extraordinarily good at OTIS," I told them. "That's a great place to start with a burger."

Our more artistic culinary presentations were brilliant too. Whiting is such a delicate fish. I would love to know how the kitchen creates

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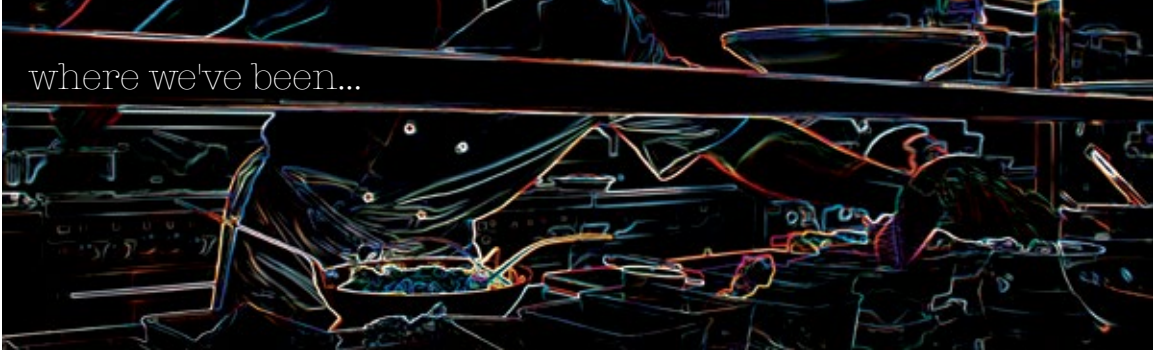
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prawn gnocchi, such an unusual addition.

Wayne insisted on dessert and eventually I succumbed to an affogato. But the 'Not So Traditional Affogato' was not what I was expecting. With the addition of chocolate pain perdu, chocolate Frangelico sauce and hazelnuts, it's a complete dessert. I was so full!

Wayne and Judy ended up somewhat sharing the Caramelised Lemon Tart with mascarpone sorbet and candied citrus zest. This was a lovely lunch with great company and everything you would expect of a top quality restaurant. OTIS is that and more.