

It's Time



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GOOD TASTE

WORDS ROBERTA MUIR

Nibbles Time.

Be it tapas, yum cha, mezze or antipasto, sharing small plates of different food is ideal for our relaxed lifestyle



CITY BITES

Chef Lauren Murdoch recently opened Ash St Cellar in the new Ivy complex in Sydney's CBD. A gorgeous spot with a delicious tapas-style menu and outdoor seating in a funky inner-city laneway, Ash St is very Melbourne, for Sydney.

Why the shift from three-course menus to shared plates?

It's a small space with quite small tables, and we're open all day so people can come in at anytime for a bite – big or small – or just to sample some good wines with a snack to keep them comfortable and nourished.

What are the advantages of this style of menu?

I've tried to offer something for everyone, including a few substantial dishes as daily specials, oysters, cheeses, meat selections, salads and more creative things like braised beef cheeks with beetroot and horseradish cream.

What's the response to this style of eating?

Great, with many repeat customers. I'd like to hope we're at the

forefront of a new trend in Sydney dining.

What do you like about cooking this way?

There's a lot of creative construction in each dish, which is fun and playful – a good thing for us crazy chefs!

Your menu's very Spanish/tapas in style – why this theme?

My first real overseas holiday was five weeks travelling around Spain. I loved it, the simple style of letting the ingredients speak for themselves really appealed to me.

There's always a tart of the day on a pedestal in the window of your open kitchen – is pastry also an interest of yours?

I spent a year in the pastry section at Rockpool as an apprentice and learnt a lot of great techniques. I didn't want to do a large dessert menu at Ash St, so what is on offer needs to be the very best, and showing it off for all to see adds to the fun atmosphere.

1 Ash St, Sydney, tel: +61 (2) 9240 3000.



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MELBOURNE

Palette, one of the newest additions to QV Square, is a super cool inexpensive café/bar that cascades out into the square. Its menu features a large section of "small plates", from freshly shucked oysters to tomato, caramelised onion and olive tart, and slow roast pork belly in soy, cinnamon and rock sugar. Cnr Lonsdale and Swanston sts, Melbourne, tel: +61 (3) 9663 3797.



PERTH

Lamont's Wine Store Cottesloe is a new "enoteca", offering an extensive small tastes menu throughout the day alongside a fabulous international wine selection. Watch out for wine tastings and special producer dinners in the dedicated private tasting room. 12 Station St, Cottesloe, Perth, tel: +61 (8) 9385 0666.



BALLINA

Sandbar & Restaurant in East Ballina has an ever-changing menu based on local produce with a strong Spanish influence and tapas-style dishes, featuring flavours from France, Spain and Mexico. From a casual snack on the terrace overlooking Shaws Bay to a full meal in the restaurant, there's something for everyone. 23 Compton Drv, Shaws Bay, East Ballina, tel: +61 (2) 6686 6602.



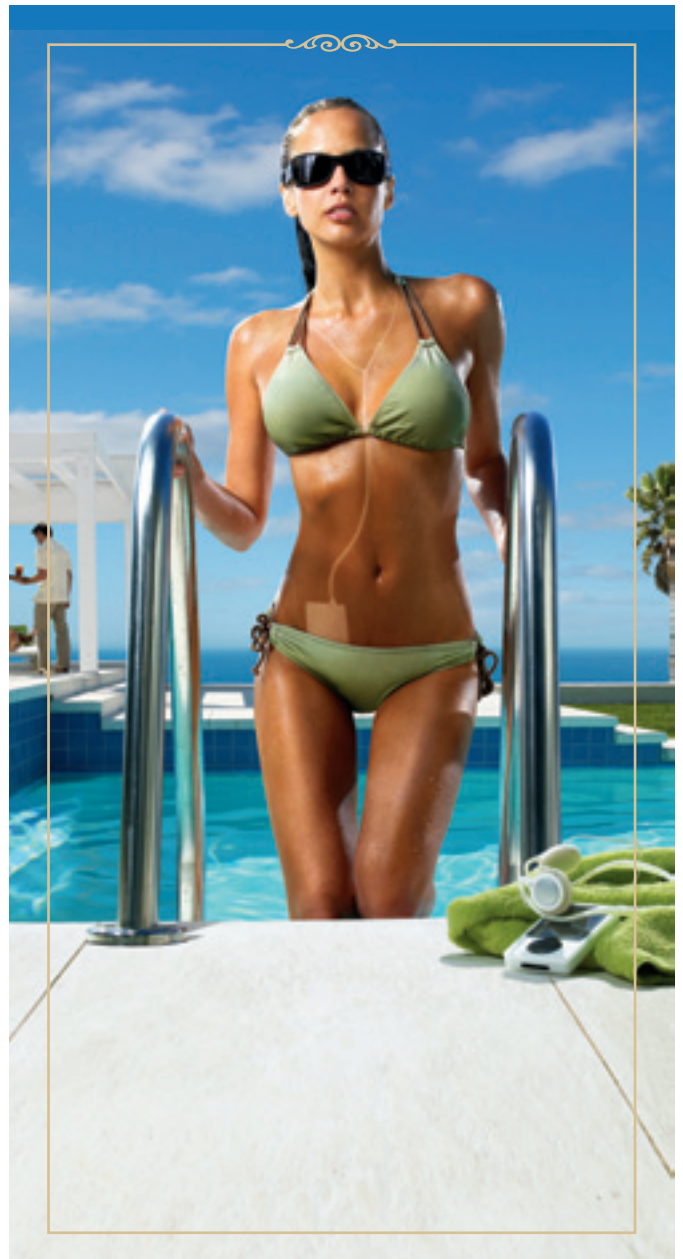
BRISBANE

With a menu written by Australia's tapas maestro, Frank Camorra of Melbourne's MoVida, depot Emporium is a hot spot for tapas with a wide selection of delicious Spanish wines and cocktails as support acts. 31/1000 Ann St, Brisbane, tel: +61 (7) 3666 0188.



HOBART

Smolt in Salamanca Square offers a menu designed for sharing, with shucked-to-order Bruny Island oysters; saffron, pea and pork arancini; braised local octopus with red wine and tomato; a salmon tasting plate; and great pizza. 2 Salamanca Sq, Hobart, tel: +61 (3) 6224 2554.



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