

# Forty One Restaurant

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*Chiefly Plaza*

*23/11/09*

*Michael Lip*

Armed with a brand new camera, three bright eyed Dinner Club members with a new appreciation for fine dining met for their first degustation together! The choice of dinner for this extravaganza was Forty One – a one chef hat restaurant on top of Chiefly Plaza with spectacular views overlooking the East side of Sydney. A beautiful day outside made the atmosphere that much better.

Unfortunately in the recent Good Food Guide Awards, Forty One dropped a chef hat from 2 to 1. We also found out at the end of the meal that the restaurant will be closing down in April next year when the lease expires. This means you need to get in quick if you want to try this place out!

The chef, Dietmar Sawyere, also owns another restaurant – Berowra Waters Inn. This is a 2 chef hat restaurant on the water which has had great reviews.

## Review

### Amuse-Bouche

#### Chilled Oyster, Soba and Cucumber Noodles, Vietnamese Dressing

An oyster for amuse-bouche was a great touch. The Asian style taste with soba noodles and a plump oyster was a great start to the meal. There was a slight tang with a Vietnamese-style dressing sprinkled over the oyster. It was only a standard oyster, but it was a nice attempt at Asian fusion with the dressing and soba (Vietnamese and Japanese flavours).

I thought a nice touch was getting the token Asian waiter to serve this dish. It almost added to the authenticity... until he forgot what exactly was in the dish.

*Did you know that fresh oysters are alive when you eat them? Yes, that was the thought running through my mind when eating this plump, juicy, **living** thing. After this knowledge, oysters are never the same. Sorry!*

### Course 1 – Entrée

#### Herb Marinated Kingfish Slivers, Salad of Yabbies, Avocado, Salmon Roe, Lemon

This seafood heavy entrée was beautiful in presentation and the taste matched expectations. Ultimately, for sashimi dishes such as this one, the differentiator is the sauce. Anyone can buy top quality kingfish, salmon roe and yabbies and serve that, but producing a sauce or marinade that accentuates the raw fish features is a challenge. The herb marinade provided a slight, but not overbearing acidic taste to the kingfish. The piece of mint, such a common item, makes the dish so much better – providing a refreshing taste.

*Did you know that sashimi can cause foodborne illness due to bacteria and parasites, such as *Anisakis simplex* (*Pseudoterranova decipiens*)? **If you are scared about this fact, please feel free to hand over your sashimi to me.***

*In addition, incorrectly prepared Fugu fish may contain Tetrodotoxin, a potent neurotoxin with no known antidote (made famous by the Simpson's episode – Season 2, Episode 11 – don't say I don't do my research ;). **Please don't give your fugu fish to me.***

## Course 2 – Entrée

### Pastilla of Chinese Style Roast Duck, Celeriac Remoulade, Crisp Hawkesbury "Schoolie" Prawns

Apparently a pastilla is an elaborate meat pie using chicken or squab as a filling – the national dish of Morocco. If you look at the photos, the dish served resembled a Chinese spring roll rather than a pie; however, I have no problem with what it looks like provided it tastes good. Thankfully, it did!

Continuing the Asian theme, a roast duck spring roll was served. There was an abundance of fried elements in this dish, but the salad provided a nice refreshing contrast. The remoulade (similar to tartar sauce) was again, not overbearing (to be honest, I didn't even notice it when eating), enhancing the dish overall. The duck was succulent, but the spring roll could have been quite easily reproduced in other restaurants.

This dish was unfortunately a little too salt-heavy and deep fried heavy for my taste. The salad did remove some of the extremes when combined, but a bit less salt would be preferable to my palate.

*Did you know that **squab** is the meat from a young domestic pigeon.*

## Course 3 – Main Course

### Grilled Sea Scallop, Pork Belly Confit, Cauliflower, Apple Reduction

Now we come to my favourite dish of the dinner – a fantastic mix of white meat with seafood (I do love scallops).

Let's analyse the scallop first. The scallop was nicely seared, with a decent check pattern on the top – Jeff's was much better, but unfortunately no photo is available. The scallop was seared on the outside, but raw on the inside – perfect for maintaining the sweetness and leaving the scallop flavour still intact. No sauce is required for a perfectly cooked scallop – in fact; any sauce may actually take away from the taste.

I also like pork belly. The chef must have known I was coming when serving this dish tonight! The pork belly was expertly done. The fat throughout and the crunchy skin made for a very unhealthy, delicious portion of meat – an interesting contrast with the scallop. The cauliflower puree was nice and creamy, providing the perfect complement to both the scallop and the pork belly.

Speculation was rife about what an "apple reduction" was before the course came. In the end, it turned out to be small diced apple off to the side. This was probably an unnecessary part of the dish – the scallop, pork belly and cauliflower puree were sufficient.

*Did you know that in cooking, a **reduction** is the process of thickening or intensifying the flavour of a liquid mixture such as a soup, sauce, wine, or juice by evaporation?*

## Soup

### Demi Tasse of Truffled Leek & Potato Soup

Add the word truffle to any dish and it automatically brings out a sense of expectation. I think that a soup at this point in the meal is meant to provide a cleansing of the palate, but this provided a whole new taste before the main course.

The soup was rich and creamy, full of flavour for two simple staple ingredients – leek and potato. The truffle really stood out as the ingredient that made the soup so fantastic.

*Did you know that a demi tasse is a small cup (the name comes from the French for "half cup"), used to serve Turkish coffee or espresso.*

## Course 4 – Main Course

### Slow Cooked Ocean Trout Fillet, Etuvée of Garden Peas, Vermouth, Sorrel or Fillet of 'Rose' Veal, Wood Mushrooms, Buttered Tagliatelle Noodles

Here, we had our first decision to make – fish or veal. For me, I had to go the ocean trout to see what cooked ocean trout was like. Would the gamble pay off? After ordering the dish, you keep wondering whether you made the right choice until the course arrives.

I dislike dishes with an abundance of peas. Unless they are sweet snap snow peas, I think ordinary peas detract from the overall taste of a dish. This was the case with this dish. I took a risk on the selection, but thought the pea influence would be minimal – er... I was wrong.

The ocean trout was propped up with a full bed of garden peas. To boot, there was a pea puree spread right down the middle of the dish!! So much for minimalism. Apart from the dislike of peas, the dish was pretty good. The ocean trout was cooked to perfection, slightly baked on the outside and still raw on the inside. The Vermouth (fortified wine) didn't do that much to enhance the trout – it may have been better just to leave the fish in its natural state (and without peas!).

The impressive thing for me about this dish was the baked potato stack served as a side portion to the trout. This wasn't mentioned in the dish title, but I thought it was fantastic. It provided a contrast to the trout – both in terms of texture and taste.

*Did you know that the relationship between fish length and weight is not linear?*

*If Length ( $L$ , in inches), Weight ( $W$ , in pounds),  $b$  and  $c$  are constants depending on the species:*

$$W = cL^b$$

*For ocean trout,  $b \approx 3$  and  $c \approx 0.0004$*

## Course 5 – Cheese Plate

### Fromart Tilsit from Euldo, Queensland, Sauvignon Blanc Poached Pear, Beetroot Oil

Wow! The point of these dinner outings is to discover new things and that is what happened with this dish. Cheese and pear – two completely different textures and tastes (not to mention levels on the food pyramid) – actually combine to become something quite extraordinary.

The pear provides the juicy component of the dish, while the cheese provides the rich taste component of the dish. The wafer wasn't all that great, but it is there to provide a way of combining the two ingredients together. Great dish, very impressive.

*Did you know that cheese is rarely found in East Asian dishes, as lactose intolerance is relatively common in that part of the world and hence dairy products are rare?*

***Hopefully I'm not lactose intolerant.***

## Pre Dessert

### Apple Jelly with Champagne Foam

The pre dessert was a cleansing of the palate. The apple jelly and champagne foam cleared other residual tastes from the other courses but wasn't anything special. The alcoholic content was pretty clear to taste.

*Did you know that a **cleansing of the palate** occurs where a person wants to fully indulge in each course without having the taste of the previous course still in their mouth? The dish is supposed to clear the residual tastes from previous courses.*

## Course 6 – Dessert

**Lemon & Lime Tart, Strawberries, Basil, Mascarpone Gelato or White Chocolate Parfait, Kirsch Marinated Cherries**

The second decision of the night came at dessert – tart or parfait. Despite the cool and sexy sounding French dessert, I went for the tart. The tart was of a crème- brûlée consistency and alone, the tart wasn't all that special. However, when combined, the tart, gelato and strawberries together provided a dynamic end to the meal.

*Did you know that I wanted the parfait!*

## Coffee and Petit Four:

The coffee (café latté) and petit four was again a great end to a fantastic evening. Mich took my truffle. That is all I remember from the petit four... Restaurant marked down for only offering one of those... Mich marked down for stealing mine...

## Ratings

### Food Quality 8.25/10

Overall taste was great. There was plenty of fresh produce and variety in the degustation to provide enough for me to write a four page review! From fish to pork belly and the pear/cheese combo, my taste buds were awoken and pleasantly surprised at what works and (in the case of peas) what doesn't.

### Value 4/10

The whole degustation set us back \$138 each. A good chunk of that would have gone to the rent – the view from the top of Chiefly is spectacular (see photos). It overlooks the entire Eastern side of Sydney. Unfortunately, this view and subsequent rent makes the food much more expensive. I'd prefer the whole amount to be spent on the food and not just the view.

### Ambiance 9/10

High class restaurants tend to be too dark for my liking and, like Galileo, this was no exception. I was delighted by the view and the photos taken by my new camera, but would prefer the money to be spent on the food rather than the view.

### Cleanliness 10/10

Again, just like Galileo, I cannot fault the place because they like to keep it clean!

### Service 10/10

Polite wait staff. Meals were served in a timely manner. The only problems were the Asian waiter at the start having difficulties with the dish and they did get Jeff's choice of dessert wrong. That's not enough for me to drop it a point – I was still very happy at the service (although if they served me the incorrect dish, that may have been different!).