

eat and drink

3C BAR AND RESTAURANT 4.5/5

WHERE: Cnr Victoria St and Chew's Lane, Wellington, ph (04) 913-1224.

WHEN: Monday and Tuesday, 11am-late; Wednesday to Friday, 7.30am-late; Saturday, 10.30am-late; Sunday, closed.

HOW MUCH: \$89 for lunch for two, including wine, desserts and coffee.

WHAT'S TO EAT: Classy contemporary food.

WHAT DO WE THINK: A stylish place perfect for impressing an important client or simply a taste of luxury.



Stylish: 3C on the corner of Victoria St and Chew's Lane, Wellington.

Photo: Kevin Stent

In good company

WELLINGTON HAS been blessed with some inhabitants who treasure heritage and it is thanks to people like the owners of 3C Bar and Restaurant that downtown is packed with history.

The Victoria St bar takes more than just its name – or, at least, the initials – from the revamped gothic building's former occupant, the Colonial Carrying Company of New Zealand.

It promotes itself as also having a similar philosophy as the old trading company's, blending exotic and simple goods from the four corners of the world.

I've often enjoyed a night out in the stylish bar, nestled at the east end of Chew's Lane development, but I'd never sampled its food despite hearing great reviews from friends.

So we find ourselves on a grey autumnal day seated at one of a gathering of tables discretely down one end of the cavernous bar. The main restaurant is upstairs but the ground floor is normally used during the day.

We settle for a glass of wine, choosing favourite local offerings from the wide selection while we suss out what fellow diners are served for sneak preview tips. Plate after plate of immaculately-presented food is whisked out, making us salivate.

My friend decides the chilly weather is the perfect excuse for

heart-warming food and orders beer-battered tarakihi with hand-cut fries, a pea puree sauce and gribache – a fancy name for tartare sauce. I pick the venison ragout with mushrooms, dark beer, puff pastry and garlic mash.

Our beautiful dishes appear in good time on enormous heavy white plates. While presentation is vital – and 3C gets top marks – the food thankfully tastes easily as good.

The bright pea green sauce, which initially sounds rather odd, turns out rather a winner. My friend raves about the freshness of her fish and how the chips really are the perfect anecdote to falling temperatures. My dish is one for meat-lovers – bulging with tender venison and mushrooms topped with golden puff pastry.

The mash is comfort-food heaven and I gobble it down.

Even though we're both full, the dessert list is irresistible. The creme brulee and biscotti pass her strict taste test and my chocolate addiction is well sated by the warm chocolate brownie with cream and vanilla chantilly. We finish with very smooth coffees, reluctant to head back to the real world. The staff have been lovely and even deliver the bill with polished panache, topped with chocolate wafers embossed with 3C.

It is certainly a perfect place to impress a business client or colleague but the upmarket vibe doesn't translate to sky-high prices and are within cooee of most cafes, while offering a more pampered experience. Go on, you deserve it!

– Deidre Mussen

The mash is comfort-food heaven.

Meow Cafe 3.5/5

149 Willis St, Te Aro, Wellington, ph (027) 335-3653.

The menu makes a commendable effort to include as many organic, free-range ingredients as possible and they have a decent, if unsurprising, list of offerings. It's a counter service cafe but the attention from staff is efficient and friendly.



Drift 3.5/5

1 Waimea Rd, Waikanae Beach, ph (04) 902-9033.

The day menu is packed with classic coastal cuisine and there's a kiwiana theme running throughout. It was an enjoyable walk down memory lane and we'll return to see how this iconic cafe is revamped.



Milk Crate 4.5/5

35 Ghuznee St, Wellington city, ph (04) 802-5960.

Attached to Bowen Gallery, it blends fine art and fine food with perfection. What entices the return of regular hoards, however, are the filled baguettes. There is not a single minuscule of scrimping in the quality of fillings.



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