

# Pleasure piled upon pleasure

Don Stott - The West Australian on July 19, 2016, 12:25 pm



All pictures: Gerald Moscarda/The West Australian

Ingo Mass is definitely in the celebrity chef category.

Awarded best chef of the Marriott Hotel Group, he also co-authored one of the top 100 cookbooks in the world: *New Arabian Cuisine*. The book turned what is basically peasant food into an exciting 21st century cuisine.

By personal invitation, he has cooked for Middle Eastern kings, princes, heads of state and ambassadors.

For lifestyle reasons, he is now in Australia banging the pans at Caversham House. The Middle East's loss is very much our gain.

The restaurant is a delight. Classically contemporary white and grey decor is calming, intimate and elegant. Floor to ceiling windows overlook gardens and courtyards and emphasise the sense of space and privacy given by the well-spaced tables. The food is as stylish as the dining room and clever enough not to be fussy.



Pork belly entree

All entrees are \$19, mains \$39 and desserts \$15. We began with the pork belly, which was silky soft with a well-rounded flavour augmented by mustard potato puree very much in the continental style, a suave apple vanilla puree, and velvety caramelised apple balls. It couldn't be faulted.

Taste of the Sea comprised baby squid with ink stuffed with prawn mousse; tempura oyster, whose batter was a tad heavy but crisp nonetheless, and a generous timbale of chopped smoked salmon very gently flavoured with wasabi.

In respectful attendance was an Asian salad, crunchy with Japanese seaweed and subtly dressed with fish sauce, garlic, lemon and sesame oil — the architecturally precise presentation cheekily mocked by slivers of marinated asparagus littering the plate. We were beginning to see why Ingo Mass has cooked for royalty.



Barramundi

The Beloved does not usually eat fish, but she was greatly enamoured of the barramundi; the skin super crisp with the flesh flaking languidly to the fork. Further crunch was added by crackly whitebait, and embellished with a roasted corn and asparagus salad and given even further distinction with a well-bred smear of lemon nage. Pleasure piled upon pleasure.

The daily special, roasted saddle of venison, was encrusted in pistachio nuts and dukkah, darkly red, as tender as a fond lover's dream and slicked with a lustrously robust reduction. Caramelised beets, both red and white, gave earthy undertones, and half a chargrilled king oyster mushroom shocked with its sheer size. The dish was symphonic, with the various components forming a unified, melodic whole.



Chocolate fondant

Desserts were visually complex, well-constructed and well organised; the chocolate fondant one of the best I have had — a firm, cakey exterior and a molten interior oozing liquid chocolate. If ever there was a panegyric to banana, you'd find it in the banana mascarpone mousse and a paean to lemon in the lemon delicious.

Apart from a dozen French reserve champagnes, the wine list is exclusively Australian — and absolutely extraordinary: 180-odd wines, not one of which I'd say no to, most with a decent age on them, and remarkably well priced. It almost took my breath away.

Mature, experienced, good-humoured staff gave the final touch to a singular dining experience.

Caversham House

Address: 141 Caversham Avenue, Caversham

Phone: 9279 1167

Open: Wednesday to Sunday 11.30am-3pm

The buzz: "" Graceful surroundings, a "celeb chef" producing modern, beautifully constructed, well-thought-out food, a cracker of a wine list, and great staff make this a first-class restaurant.

Visit: [restaurant@cavershamhouse.com.au](mailto:restaurant@cavershamhouse.com.au)

Score: 17/20

**The West Australian**