

WEEKEND

Alix Davis Indulge



Relaunch results in classy spread

Plenty of chefs and restaurants talk about local produce these days but in Tasmania it actually means something – food miles are low, small producers abound and diners are rewarded with meals that really reflect a sense of place. It's this passion for local produce – and the people who nurture it, that drives Ben Milbourne – high school science teacher turned MasterChef contestant turned produce advocate and TV host.

As the new culinary curator of Peacock and Jones, Milbourne is working closely with head chef Ishan Acharya to match his relationships with local producers with Acharya's technical expertise and experience in the kitchen to create a menu that's full of Tasmanian flavour.

"It's the story of Tasmania on a plate," says Milbourne. "It's real and it's the truth and Tasmania is the only place you can really say the food is local."

Our meal begins with a slice of Pigeon Whole Baker sourdough with a knob of Meander Valley Dairy salted butter. It's simple (it's bread and butter, of course it is!) but sets the tone for what's to come.

The French onion soufflé (\$23) with Heidi Farm Gruyere is a moreish combination of delicate soufflé infused with onion and surrounded by a creamy, cheesy sauce that's got just a bit of stretch to it. Topped with a finely chopped salad that provides crunch and acidity, it's a very enjoyable start.

The aged hiramasa kingfish (\$26) is served with a buttermilk sauce and foraged nasturtiums, the thickness of the pieces depends on whether it's loin or belly and each bite is tender and flavourful.

The dining room, in the historic IXI factory on the waterfront, is full of history – from the thick sandstone walls and timber beams to paraphernalia from the jam factory that used to operate from here. Upholstered chairs make for a comfortable dining experience and a floating fireplace adds a sophisticated touch of warmth. The room, which opens to the atrium next door is busy, but it's easy to enjoy a quiet conversation while you eat.

The waitstaff are attentive and it's obvious a lot of time and effort has gone into training, as they are all able to explain the origins of each dish as well as answer additional questions and are as engaged with the food as the kitchen staff.

Extra cutlery is provided for shared dishes, a small but notable detail that I



PEACOCK AND JONES
33 Hunter St, Hobart
OPENING HOURS Wednesday-Saturday from 6pm

On the menu

French onion soufflé, \$23; aged hiramasa kingfish, \$26; Strelleyfield duck, \$42; koji-aged pork chop, \$42; local potatoes, \$12; broccoli, \$12; chocolate delicé, \$19; and the bombe Alaska, \$17.



Peacock and Jones' aged hiramasa kingfish; head chef Ishan Acharya and culinary curator Ben Milbourne; the divine, rich chocolate delicé; and Strelleyfield duck from Breadalbane. Chefs picture: Samuel Shelley

have seen missing in other establishments.

My friend and I are deep in conversation when our mains arrive, but they're worth stopping for.

Strelleyfield Duck (\$42) from Breadalbane in the north is a leg that has been cooked confit, then shredded, pressed and pan-seared to create a crispy portion of rich, succulent meat. It's served with a tangy jus and a chargrilled wedge of radicchio as well as a seared slice of boudin (blood sausage).

My koji-aged pork chop (\$42) is a hefty 3cm thick and served just slightly pink inside, rendering it moist and flavourful with just the right amount of char on the fat. It's been cut from the bone, meaning I don't have to wrestle with it at the table

and can eat it delicately, like the lady I am (ahem). On the side is a beautifully dressed shaved celeriac salad, spiked with slivers of candied citron and toasted walnuts. Pink eye potatoes from Rocky Tops Farm are slathered with creme fraiche and pistou and, while Milbourne assures me that great produce practically does the work for you, even the best spuds never taste this good when I cook them at home!

Other notable mains include Lyndall Farm lamb (\$42), that's rolled backstrap, rump and loin roasted and served with fermented black barley and Leap Farm curdy (unsalted goat's curd).

The dessert selection is small but perfectly formed. If you're a chocolate lover, the chocolate delicé (\$19) is a no-

brainer. It's rich and decadent and I'd recommend sharing it or risking a chocolate coma (don't say I didn't warn you). The bombe Alaska (\$17) on the other hand is not something I would like to share. I would like it all to myself and was happy to slip a spoon into the layers of lightly torched meringue, raspberry sorbet and lemon verbena ice cream spiked with a little yuzu curd. It's sweet and tangy and the soft meringue is velvety with a hint of marshmallow.

Cheese lovers can enjoy a selection of local varieties, served with a wedge of honeycomb from the base of Mt Wellington and a spoonful of sweet carrot jam.

As keen as I am to travel now that borders are opening, when local food tastes this good, it's hard to tear myself away.