

# Casual classics

Lizzie Loel

**T**HE transformation of Oxford St, Bulimba into a culinary destination is almost complete. There's Tonic taking in the river views; Liquorish, chef/owner Jason Coats's stylish new venue, and the renovated and expanded Bulimba Hotel, a large and busy gastro-pub. There are also several high-end ethnic venues dotted in between the cafes, teahouses and boutiques.

Chill Bar and Dining is on the left side of the road heading towards the river, with a chocolate-toned space opening on two sides of its corner position. Inside, there are high stools and a three-sided bar which dominates the interior. Dining tables spill on to a front terrace which catches the winter sun in the afternoon.

Recently, the popular hangout has changed hands and is now owned by Tim Nicholls with industry identity, Guy Dupen installed as manager.

Chef Neil Smith, who previously owned the Fish Kitchen in Coorparoo heads the kitchen brigade bringing with him a wealth of experience and a casual approach to classic dishes.

An interesting line up of small flavours at the top of the menu are called tapas although they are untraditional in flavour. Pissaladiere, Asian-style dumplings and Texas smokehouse spare ribs are unlikely to be found in Spain where this style of eating originated, but the ability to share and to taste lots of little interesting morsels is much the same.



We over-ordered, expecting to be joined promptly by a third person, only to find that he was suffering from a nasty bout of flu and could not lend his palate to our cause. This proved no obstacle as the three-tiered plate stacker arrived bearing a colourful array of fresh produce.

Like the tapas, the pissaladiere also made a serious deviation from tradition; normally this term donates a thin-based pizza topped with anchovies olives and caramelised onions.

This one had generous layers of provolone anchoring plump king prawns into place over a powerful tomato base. It was crisp, firm and chatty with sweet, mildly spiced prawns still juicy and tender despite the blast of high temperature needed to achieve a well-cooked base.

I loved the dumplings, four to a

serving and almost seized the opportunity to take a third while my guest was distracted by the telephone.

Her eyes were trained on the scallops, baked in their half shell with a buttery glaze scented with coriander and mint.

Queenslanders have a short opportunity to enjoy dishes such as coq au vin, lamb shanks and venison pie particularly at lunch when the days are hardly chilly. I took the opportunity to try the coq au vin which proved to be not only a dish big on flavour but big on quantity as well. Again roasted at high temperature and rested well, the clear juices flowed from the crisp-skinned pieces of chicken immersed in the well-integrated wine and stock sauce.

Our other choice of mahi mahi on braised de puy lentils dotted with tomato went over well for its simplicity of composition as well as the firm, fresh and perfectly cooked fillet.

Cherry ripe pudding was a meal in itself. Using all the same ingredients as the chocolate bar minus the cloying sweetness, the tangy cherries and toasty coconut made an indulgent end, and because of the richness, a perfect pud to share.

Chill has a substantial wine list with some interesting gems such as the Peter Rumball sparkling red, among four other Aussie sparklings and three champagnes. Other wines are divided into blend and varietals and there's enough choice as well by the glass.

This is a friendly, competently run suburban bistro with personality derived from both the staff and the regular patronage.



WINTER warmers ... clockwise from above, coq au vin; inside the stylish Chill Bar; pissaladiere; scallops; cherry ripe pudding. Pictures: Megan Cullen



## CHILL BAR AND DINING

**Address:** 207 Oxford Street, Bulimba  
**Phone:** 3899 5544

**Hours:** lunch 11.30am-3pm; dinner 6pm-10pm (tapas from 5pm). Closed Mondays during August.

**Liquor status:** licensed  
**Prices:** entrees \$13-\$18; mains \$12-\$24; desserts \$12; wines \$29.90-\$150

**Owner:** Tim Nicholls and Shelley Dover

**Chef:** Neil Smith

**Smoking:** no

**Parking:** on street and beneath

**Wheelchair access:** yes; and facilities  
**Other:** seats 80; all major credit cards; no diners; airconditioned

### THE SCORE

**Food:** 15

**Wine:** 14

**Service:** 16

**Ambience:** 15

**About the score:** 0-5 don't bother; 6-9 needs serious improvement; 10-12 reasonable, room for improvement; 13-14 good; 15-17 very good; 18-19 exceptional; 20 perfection.