

FOOD & WINE

weekender.

Muse's little sister refined, yet casual

BY DANIEL HONAN

WALKING out of Muse Kitchen, into the courtyard, and rounding the corner of the two-storey cottage, you're immediately struck by the magnificent rocky sweep of the Brokenback Range. Decorated, as it typically is, with white woolly clouds and their menacing vein of grey against a bright blue sky.

Keith Tulloch's vines are now flush with leafy green foliage, slowly converting sunlight into wine. A satisfied smile soon matches your stomach and stretches even further across your face as you bask in the glow of the warm afternoon sun, having just spent the past two hours eating and drinking at Muse's little sister restaurant, Muse Kitchen.

Inside this soft-toned two-storey cottage are two separate dining areas filled with the sound of 60s pop above clinking cutlery and diners deep in discussion; the homely smell of fresh flowers, Pears soap, and something delicious cooking nearby; and the sight of white, textured wooden tables and chairs, set with polished glasses, plates, knives and forks. It feels like a brand new cottage in provincial France with an Australian beachside twist.

Muse Kitchen has a dedicated menu for vegetarians, which goes beyond the usual one or two-choice option of many restaurants. It includes dishes like Dutch cream and potato gnocchi, steamed cauliflower, and jersey milk bavarois with bitter chocolate and poached rhubarb, for dessert. Many of these dishes also appear on the regular and banquet menus. On this occasion, my dining associate and I, who are both partial to animal protein, indulge and order the banquet menu to enjoy the best of both worlds.

To start, we share a pile of soft, fleshy white chunks of blue-eye trevalla, some bright pieces of orange, white dabs of crème fraîche, strips of green mint, and a few practical, not just pretty, micro-herbs splashed with a chardonnay vinaigrette. When each element is combined, the dish becomes a balanced melting pot of refreshing citrus and salt flavours, underpinned by the delicate creaminess of the crème fraîche and acidic, yet soft vinaigrette. A small plate of Applewood smoked salmon with jersey milk ricotta and buttery, toasted rye sourdough accompanies the ceviche curtain raiser.



WELCOME OFFSPRING: Muse Kitchen at Keith Tulloch Winery, on Hermitage Road, Pokolbin.



FROM THE KITCHEN: Simply sophisticated

Smoked pink strips of shredded salmon is mixed with fine slithers of red onion, crunchy radish and just-picked green herbs to create a fresh feeling appetiser.

Next up, thick, T-shaped hunks of grilled king brown mushroom and washed rind cheese rest around dark green char-grilled cos lettuce leaves wet with a sweet and salty jus that balances and lifts such earthy flavours to delectable heights. Meanwhile, the Dutch cream potato gnocchi with Jerusalem artichoke cream, and shaved Pecorino cheese is another wonderfully

flavoured earth-bound dish that features an artichoke sauce, awash with butter, garlic and onion, combined with the nutty flavours of the Pecorino cheese and plush textures of the soft tubes of gnocchi.

The wait-staff are polite and casual, yet totally professional. Each course arrives at the table at a steady pace that allows for the conversation and the wine to flow, and the food from the previous course to get used to its new surroundings. The drinks list features a lot of wines from the Hunter Valley, in particular Keith Tulloch Wines, which makes perfect sense, as Muse Kitchen is right next-door. A bottle of dry rosé wine is versatile enough to accompany the first three courses on this warm springtime afternoon.

For main, we enjoy a plate each of confit Berkshire pork jowl with sugar snap peas, asparagus, cauliflower cream, and caramelised apple, befitting both the decor around us and the season. The pork melts with moist flavour and an ever so crispy crust of piquant spice. The accompanying garden vegies compete for texture, each adding their signature fresh garden flavour to a dish that will be savoured for a long while later.

The fourth and final round sees us end

our afternoon delight with yoghurt panna cotta, featuring crushed blueberries, walnut praline and 'langues de chats', which translates to 'cat tongue', or, a small sugary, buttery cookie. My favourite way to end a three (or four) course meal; a dessert that's not too sweet, runs the spectrum of texture, and leaves you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated.

Muse Kitchen has the fine dining refinement of her big sister, Muse Restaurant, but with a more informal approach that results in a relaxing afternoon dining between the vines, beneath the Brokenback Range.

QUICK BITE

- What: Muse Kitchen
- Where: Keith Tulloch Winery, Hermitage & Deasys Rd, Pokolbin
- Chef: Troy Rhoades-Brown
- Drinks: Wine, cider, beer, spirits, and soft drinks.
- Hours: Lunch: Wed-Sun 12pm-3pm / Dinner: Sat 6pm-9pm
- Vegetarian: Yes,
- Bottom Line: \$200 for two, incl. drinks
- Wheelchair Access: Yes
- Do Try: Chef's Banquet Menu

New study reveals truth about wraps

A UNIVERSITY of Newcastle Study has found that not all wraps are as healthy as we think and can be high in salt and contain artificial preservatives.

The solution? Take the time to check food labels.

A team of researchers led by Professor Clare Collins from the University of Newcastle undertook an evidence-based analysis of publicly available nutrition information of 22 of Australia's top-selling wraps brands in the *Wraps Unwrapped Report*. These products represent 80 per cent of the wraps purchased by Australians from major supermarkets around the country in the 12 months to July 17, 2016.

Among the findings were:

- Seventeen of the top 22 wraps brands

contained artificial preservatives;

- Wraps vary in sodium levels significantly, with one serve of some wraps containing six times as much salt as others. The variation between the highest salt wraps and the lowest salt wrap on a 100g basis was found to be three-fold;
- The market-leading brand Mission contains the highest salt levels of all the wraps studied – one serve of these wraps on average contains 561mg of sodium. That's more than one third of the amount of sodium in the Australian Suggested Dietary Target for chronic disease prevention, which is 1600mg of sodium or 4g of salt per day;
- The average sodium level of all other brands in the top 22 for comparison was found to be 198mg of sodium per serve –

almost one third that of the average of the Mission wraps;

- Swapping to a lower-salt wrap like Helga's Traditional White Wraps (430mg of sodium per 100g) can reduce your salt intake by 40 per cent with the bonus of not containing any artificial preservatives.

Professor Collins said some wraps that appeared healthy had the potential to make a significant contribution to daily salt intakes when consumed regularly.

"Consuming large amounts from one wrap is not ideal, especially when we know from the National Nutrition Survey that among those who ate wraps, the average daily intake was 1.5 wraps. If you choose to eat the most popular wrap on the market, this can account for 90 teaspoons of salt to your diet every year."



LABELS: Do your research when it comes to wraps, a university study suggests.