

THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

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THE FOOD ISSUE



HOT 50 2016 RESTAURANTS



WHAT WE'RE
EATING NOW

FARMING
THE DESERT

THE NEW
ARTISANS

HOT
50
2016
RESTAURANTS

MONSTER
Canberra

At one table, careerists hunch over laptops; by the fireplace, folks relax with a mag on smart leather. In the periphery you'll see guests checking into Hotel Hotel, a barista or chefs doing their thing. Some of us are actually eating and drinking. Canberra's Monster is like a photo shoot for *Monocle* magazine (perhaps for a piece headlined "Morphing spaces and contemporary design freedom"). It's a collaborative, all-day work space with food and wine. There's a fresh energy to Sean McConnell's informal food at Monster that both surprises with its ideas and truly delivers on satisfaction. It's how you get dishes such as heirloom tomato with tamarind, chilli and dried shrimp or broccoli with barley, miso and sunflower seeds from a tight list of around nine shared dishes. Or perfectly prepared then char-grilled WA octopus with fried dill, smoked paprika and almond cream. There's also a "bar menu" where you'll find superb beef tartare with black crackers, toasted nori and Japanese spices, whipped avocado and sticky, toffee-like cured yolk. Almost as memorable as a dessert of rose and raspberry-poached nectarine with a barbary sauce, rose granita, candied petals, yoghurt sorbet and fairy floss. Monster is edgy, fun and delightfully unpretentious. It's whatever you want it to be, and as long as McConnell is steering the kitchen, that's fine with us.

Must eat: Beef tartare.

Please consider: Diners, as a rule, deserve better waiters than coffee customers. monsterkitchen.com.au

BAR BROSE
Darlinghurst, Sydney

Rules? Break them. That's the philosophy at this sexy kind-of-French, kind-of-something-else wine bar/restaurant/bolthole opened in March by



chef Analiese Gregory, with support from the risqué lads from nearby ACME. The boundary-pushing Gregory, schooled at some of the world's great kitchens (Quay, The Ledbury, Le Meurice), has created a genre-defying menu that kicks out at fine dining while delivering food of such solid classical foundation you could stand up on it. Start with textbook Comté gougère, puffy cheese pastries you tear apart by hand, followed by a series of smart, lighter dishes that are European by construction but look to Asia for design tips. You might eat raw kingfish bathed in sweet, tangy quince juice, or an airy plate of pastrami tongue dressed with shiitake slivers and soft herbs. Don't bother with the much-written about, gimmicky "late-night sandwich" because the more substantial dishes are wondrous: "poulet au vin jaune" is airlifted out of 19th-century France into contemporary Australia via meaty shiitakes substituted for morelles, while pillowy potato gnocchi dance with slices of chewy lag cheong in a sauce of kombu butter. Wow. The occasionally offbeat wine list is strong; and if the eclectic music is too loud and the high



stools not entirely comfortable for ageing backs, well, find compensation in feeling part of a scene that is irrepressibly young, bold and cool.

Must eat: Comté gougère.

Please consider: A stronger pour of wine. We ordered full glasses, not halves. barbrose.com.au

WILDFLOWER
Perth

Hottest Restaurant WA

As in Tasmania, the food of Western Australia is its own entity, from

HALL OF FAME

NEW ENTRY