



From top:  
Beef tartare with  
smoked eel;  
truffle gnocchi;  
Otis Dining Hall's  
Damian Brabender.



# THE REVIEW

## Otis Dining Hall, ACT

**T**he nation's capital has had quite an enticing food evolution over recent years – Monster, Temporada and eightysix, among others, helping give Canberra the contemporary edge it's long craved. Otis Dining Hall, in the lakeside suburb of Kingston, manages to strike an engaging balance between progressive newcomer and old faithful – with a dose of tongue-in-cheek fun thrown in for good measure.

Housed in a former Belgian beer cafe, they've opened up the space and decked it out with warming dark wood paneling, mirrors, chandeliers, tall brown leather chairs and a long bar (open quite late) for those that like to dine at a bench or bend the arm after a long day.

The bustling bistro is backed by affable staff, and a wine list that not only supports the region but looks after the bank balance too.

Chef and owner Damian Brabender (formerly of Canberra's award-winning Sage) is cooking with maturity by respecting the classics as much as reviving them with a breath of fresh air.

Classic potted chicken liver pâté hides beneath a thin layer of fat. The luxurious, velvet spread benefits from a liberal serving of crisp baguette, while cornichons add a sharp exclamation mark.

Meanwhile, a temptingly toothsome risotto highlights the sweet earthiness of new season peas, and the delicate grassy notes of beautifully cooked John Dory fillets.

Brabender continues the nostalgic tip to suburban life with a housemade rendition of Neapolitan ice cream – dense vanilla ice cream joining fresh strawberry gelato and an aerated chocolate mousse in a bowl of grin-inducing joy.

Otis Dining Hall has added to the ACT's culinary evolution without letting go of the building blocks of the past. 29 Jardine St, Kingston; [thisisotis.com.au](http://thisisotis.com.au)



## GO DIRECTORY

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Best of the newcomers when dining and drinking.

### MELBOURNE

#### OSTERIA ILARIA

From the team that made Italian sexy and salubrious with Tipo 00, comes a modern bistro with a cracking cocktail and wine list, and simple Mediterranean food that'd make your nonna weep. Think charred, pink duck breast with radicchio, corn puree and cime di rapa, or paccheri (tubed pasta) with prawn oil and sorrel. 367 Little Bourke St; [osteriailaria.com](http://osteriailaria.com)

### SYDNEY

#### ROCKER

Chef Darren Robertson (Three Blue Ducks) has joined forces with Cameron Northway (Sweet&Chilli) to raise the bar on everyday eats with a heavy European edge, served with a chilled beachside vibe. Think unctuous WA oocies with crème fraîche, nasturtium and preserved citrus, or a pumpkin, sage and burnt butter arriving entwined in little elbows (Macaroni). 5/39-53 Campbell Parade; [rockerbondi.com.au](http://rockerbondi.com.au)

### ADELAIDE

#### THE POT FOOD AND WINE

Formerly The Melting Pot, the new Pot Food and Wine has brought in 2016 Chef of the Year, Emma McCaskill. The menu offers whole baked flounder coated in togarashi, roasted baby brussels sprouts with Brasil nuts, raisins and black vinegar, and roasted duck with pickled plum. 160 King William Rd; [thepotfoodandwine.com.au](http://thepotfoodandwine.com.au)

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