

Momofuku Seiobo

Expect a thrilling voyage of gastronomic discovery as David Chang, head chef Ben Greeno and brigade present an unforgettable multi-course fine-dining experience. The best seats in the house at Momofuku Seiobo are along the kitchen counter, where you'll be served artful surprises, like the famous steamed pork bun with a squirt of schiracha.

Quay

Is it the sparkling harbour location, the uninterrupted views to the Opera House or Peter Gilmore's unique, culinary vision? Tick all three for this great gateway restaurant, Quay. A love of botanical art translates into dishes including freshwater marron with scales of micro radish and superb rosehip puree, and abalone and squab in an anchovy broth garnished with white bean flowers.

Rockpool

Neil Perry has relocated his iconic restaurant from the Rocks to an historic building in the northern CBD. Nothing else has changed. Rockpool is a standard bearer of creative contemporary Australian cuisine, now in its 25th year, and the menu under chef Phil Wood is always an exciting blend of Asian and European influences.

Sepia

Martin Benn's many years as head chef at Tetsuya's are evident in the dazzling harmonies of texture, flavour and mood in his Japanese-inspired dishes at Sepia. Don't let the corporate atmosphere mislead you; this is cooking that is far from conservative. A new Yakitori menu served at the bar is the more affordable option. Wine service under sommelier Rodney Setter is exemplary.

ARIA

The flagship restaurant of Matt Moran and Peter Sullivan enjoys a privileged location next to the Opera House and with views to the Harbour Bridge. ARIA is a magnet for overseas visitors, celebrities and romantic couples on the big night out. Food and service is polished and professional, and there's something for the most to the least adventurous palate here: veal tartare with peas, Per Sé caviar and a sherry vinegar dressing; roasted Fremantle octopus with jamón, potato and Espelette pepper;

mango soufflé with mango sorbet.

Biota Dining

Biota offers tranquil rural setting with manicured lawns, a lake and honking geese won't prepare you for the fireworks on the plate. Chef James Biota is an artist of the kitchen and his quest for perfection is obvious in dishes such as silky pasta sheets, sheep's curd and white asparagus topped with egg yolk rye crumbs and bottarga; local Burrawang duck with dried pear skin, white raisins and pureed cauliflower.

The Bridge Room

Ross Lusted is the rare case of a chef who left an international career in resort hotel food and beverage for the risks and rewards of his own restaurant. And what a relaxed assured restaurant it is, too, with The Bridge Room's serene stylish Scandinavian mood. Lusted blends South East Asian and Nordic elements in a clever, always interesting menu, such as raw wagyu shoulder with enoki grated fresh horseradish and pickled chilli.

Buon Ricordo

Tradition is never far from your table here: the white-jacketed waiters holding decanters, the formal table settings and heavy furnishings that wouldn't be out of place in a Visconti film. Some dishes at Buon Ricordo, such as owner Armando Percuoco's much-loved fettuccine al tartufovo (truffled egg pasta) and the Bracioletta Reginaldo (crumbed veal, spinach and parmesan) will never leave the menu, while the wine list offers the best of Italy's regional estates.

est.

In a sweeping, colonnaded dining room, chef Peter Doyle presents modern Australian cuisine with a nod to the French classics. Business types adore lunch-hour indulgences at est., such as game consommé, foie gras tortellini, beef tendon and venison cheeks. Desserts are the peak of elegance as in bittersweet Valrhona chocolate and griotte delice with sour cherry sorbet.

Four in Hand Dining Room

Nose-to-tail dining found its Antipodean home here at Four in Hand Dining Room, in the hands of an Irish chef with a big personality. Colin Fassnidge serves up food for diners with a real appetite. Think lashings of beef brisket, a tender loin of suckling pig with its tail and ear as a bonus.

Gastro Park

If you're willing, let eccentric, inventive chef Grant King take you on the wings of his imagination to some places your tastebuds haven't been before. Calamari 'crackling' and ink sauce, golden roast sweetbreads with wild sorrel and 'raviol' of baby turnip – it's all here at Gastro Park, followed by desserts that are equally astonishing.

Icebergs Dining Room & Bar

A timeless location on the cliffs atop an iconic crescent of sand ensures the enduring glamour of Icebergs Dining Room & Bar, Maurice Terzini's first Sydney restaurant. For chic Mediterranean simplicity the menu doesn't disappoint, while the spectacular bar is a romantic spot for a Campari before dinner.

Longrain

Sydney's first stylish south-east Asian bar and restaurant, Longrain, is still a contender. If fiery spice, icy cocktails and communal dining are your thing, this is where to come. The authentic Thai harmonies of sweet, hot, salty and sour are captured in dishes such as crisp caramelised pork hock with five spice, chilli and vinegar and sour orange curry with scallops, cuttlefish mussels, betel leaves and lemon grass.

Lucio's

Lucio's is one of the city's most hospitable Italian restaurants, now 30 years in business. Famous Australian artists adorn the walls and more than a few tuck in a napkin here, too. The menu is Ligurian in inspiration so expect fish and shellfish to be the stars. Don't miss the green Moreton Bay bugs on fregolone or the whole snapper baked in rock salt.

Marque Restaurant

Mark Best is one of Sydney chefdom's intellectual leaders. His curiosity in the kitchen is boundless and the results of his daring boundary-pushing approach can be seen in Marque Res dishes such as smoked eel with parmesan gnocchi and pumpkin, bass groper with green tomato, verjus, potato paper, fish milk and roe. This is one of Sydney's very special dining experiences.

MoVida

Frank Camorra's Sydney venue MoVida lives up to the Melbourne original, where signature dishes such as Cantabrian anchovies with smoked tomato sorbet, cuttlefish tartare and the charcoal-roasted spatchcock with Mojo Picon & Pipparas are a revelation of flavours and textures.

Mr Wong

A jewel in the Merivale group crown, this sophisticated split-level Cantonese temple that is Mr Wong, behind the Establishment complex, offers admirable versions of the classics: salt and pepper squid, beef and black bean, XO pipis and Peking duck. The thrills come with Eric Koh's exquisite dumplings that change daily.

Ormeeggio at The Spit

Innovative Italian fare is the order of the day at this light-filled waterside restaurant, Ormeeggio, on a marina at the Spit. Alessandro Pavoni and Federico Zanellato offer a sometimes surprising take on regional Italian specialities, such as tortelli filled with Wagyu beef cheek seved with zucchini flowers, shallots and aged sheep ricotta, and an amazing fennel seed gelato with carrot, faro and vinegar caramel.

Pilu at Freshwater

Next best thing to a European summer on the Costa Smeralda? A Sydney summer lunch or dinner at Pilu at Freshwater, Giovanni Pilu's homage to his island birthplace in Italy, overlooking Freshwater. Step up from beach to this handsome beach house, where they use local produce where possible on dishes like crisp pane carasau (large rounds of flatbread), cheesy ravioli culurzones, and the city's juiciest porceddu

Rockpool Bar & Grill

Neil Perry's soaring Art Deco dining room, Rockpool Bar & Grill, in the Sydney CBD is a special place for a business lunch, a family party or even a romantic coupling over a softly lit table. Start with a martini in the bar and then move to the beautiful Gotham-style restaurant where the menu and wine list are extensive enough to satisfy all your guests.

Spice Temple

Neil Perry's long-term interest in the many regional cuisines of China translates into this dark, sexy, resolutely non-Cantonese subterranean dining room underneath Rockpool Bar & Grill. Jiangx, Yunan and Guangxi provinces are represented in Spice Temple's dishes such as tingling prawns, "strange flavour" white-cut chicken, and Hunan-style pork belly.

Subo

Beau and Susie Vincent have made this minimalist, former shopfront room on Hunter Street, Newcastle into a destination dining experience. Vincent trained under Tetsuya and Guillaume Brahimi, so there's serious technique in his seasonally driven, five-course tasting menu at Subo. Be surprised by a ceviche of crystal bay prawns with local sea succulents and ponzu or confit chicken wings with blackened corn, sage and hay veloute.

Tetsuya's

One of a handful of Sydney restaurants with a truly international reputation, Tetsuya's remains a serene exception to many of its stridently self-promoting peers. There's a gratifying simplicity in the uncluttered dining rooms and the modest but beautiful Japanese garden. Dishes such as the signature salad of the sea and the Petuna ocean trout are always sought-after, as is the spectacular hazelnut marquise.

- See more at: <http://restaurant.australia.com/en/explore/new-south-wales/Restaurants/nsws-hatted-and-highly-awarded-restaurants.html#sthash.xDfi0toh.dpuf>