



PICTURES ROB DUNCAN



OOOOH ... AAAARGH ... Oh, oh, oh ... Yes. YES! YES! ... Oh God ... Oh God ... YES!

This is the dialogue from the most famous movie scene in a restaurant (with the exception perhaps of the emetic grotesquery that is Monty Python's Mr Creosote). It's the When Harry Met Sally orgasm scene. Meg Ryan/Sally Albright is demonstrating to a sceptical Billy Crystal/Harry Burns the ineluctable truth that women fake it. But as brilliant as Ryan's scene is, it's the droll punch-line delivered by Estelle Reiner (director Rob Reiner's mum, by the way) that has become one of cinema's most memorable.

"I'll have what she's having" seemed to say so much more than just those five words: resignation, longing, wistfulness? And it was made naughtier and more piquant than it otherwise might have been, because it was delivered by someone looking like a bingo mum.

I was thinking these thoughts as I watched, with envy, what the Uber-Blonde was forking into her mouth. Before her was a slice of Stilton and white onion tart, \$16. Its scent was heady. Even at a distance, it was clear the pastry was good. But it was the fact that it was a slice out of a big flan — not a small individual tartlet — that made it somehow proper, more interesting, more confident. Its size certainly helped give the custard a better set.

We had strolled in to Quarter restaurant on a whim after an earlier drinks function. We'd heard it was good. What we found was the best new arrival on the Perth restaurant scene this year. It's so good it makes you go a little goose-bumpy just thinking about it. We don't see a lot of modern British cookery here, but that's what you're getting at Quarter: confident, smart, polished technique and with the DNA of a stylish Spitalfields bistro.

While I was envious of her tart, I wasn't doing too badly myself: the "Mini Thai fish cakes", \$13, was an

Quarter

Ground floor, Wesley Centre, corner Hay and William streets, Perth, (08) 9322 2424

OPEN Breakfast and lunch, Monday-Friday. Dinner Wednesday-Saturday.

PRICE RANGE

| | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Share plates..... | \$3.50-\$28 |
| Starters..... | \$14-\$19 |
| Main..... | \$24-\$38 |
| Dessert..... | \$7-\$8.50 |

THE BUZZ It's the best thing to happen to the Perth food scene in quite a while. There's a restrained boldness about the food. Wine list is small but good. It needs a proper cheese list. All in all: stunning.

score: 17/20

1-9: Unacceptable. 9-11: Patchy. 12-13: Getting there. 14: Recommended. 15-16: Very good. 17: Memorable. 18-19: Outstanding. 20: Perfection.

exercise in well-pitched flavour, simple execution and precision. The small cakes had been made from a combination of salmon and white fish poached in a coconut milk broth. It was bound with a house-made red curry paste (brilliant, sparkling flavour) and potato. The vodka lime beurre blanc paid the fish a great compliment. Marvellous.

Lamb assiette, \$37 (pictured), was simply clever in the way that simplicity and cleverness inform the best art, best architecture, best music and best fashion. It's all about confidence, intelligence and what's left out: no geegaws, no pimping, no over-dressing.

There were three lamb dishes on the plate: a pink, sweet and buttery-soft frenched chop, cut from a sous-vided rack; a small bowl of cottage pie made with a minced braise of lamb and a piped potato top; and a "sausage" of shredded long-cooked shoulder of lamb.

I was getting very close to Sally Albright territory at this point — in fact I think there was a small groan of pleasure halfway through the first mouthful of shoulder. Underscoring these three lamb morsels was a lurid green spinach puree, roasted garlic and the inevitable "jus". Truly, simply, magnificently brilliant.

The pan-fried snapper with steamed prawn dumplings, \$35, was an exercise in restrained technique and amplified flavour. In many ways, this is a dish that almost every chef in the land has had a go at — fish on wilted greens, in a broth — but I have never tasted one with as much bombast and class. The broth was swimming pool clear, yet with the complex scent of a Thai street stall. The fish was well timed. The two dumplings were text book: soft and pliant on the outside; moussey and textured on the inside.

But for sheer wit and composure, chef Shannon Wilson's Earl Grey custard with Eccles cake, \$13, was a delight. The custard — a silky creme patissiere in a white tea cup — was exactly the colour of a mug of weak Bushells but with the mild flavour of bergamot and tannin. The Eccles cake — a favourite among afternoon tea-taking vicars and women in twin sets of a previous age — was spot on: slightly warm, rich with currants and citrus zests and nicely sugary.

All this, plus a small but well-curated wine list, silky service and a lovely room.

You will be rewarded with the sort of pleasure you can't fake. **W**