



It's no surprise that tipping in the west is something that happens on racetracks and not in restaurants. Good service attracts a tip but many eating houses here have very average service. The wait staff, admittedly mainly itinerants and students, lack customer savvy and treat their jobs simply as a way to make a few extra bucks. A rethink by local training organisations and restaurateurs is needed to lift standards.

It was a pleasure, therefore, to dine at the **Quarter**, a new restaurant/cafe at the Wesley Centre in the CBD. Here the front-end brigade is youthful and up to the mark. Led by consummate professional **Ryan Taylor**, the team thankfully is not 'too familiar' but goes about its business of advising customers, taking orders and bringing wine and food from the bar and kitchen to the tables with confidence and skill. And then there is Perth-born chef **Shannon Wilson**, who heads up the **Quarter** kitchen. He has spent the past 10 years overseas, including a stint at **Heston Blumenthal's The Fat Duck** and at **Richard Branson's Roof Top Gardens** and he's back home with an armoury of recipes and fresh ideas, notwithstanding amazing talent. "Working overseas is something that all young chefs should do," he says, "it'll be long hours and tiring stuff but the experience is irreplaceable."

We begin dinner with a rillette of smoked mackerel and poached salmon, served with cherry tomatoes, small cubes of beetroot, baby cress and a beetroot reduction. The fish is pleasantly salty with just a waft of smokiness, the tomatoes are tiny bombs full of exploding ripeness and acidity and the

beetroot and cress add colour and texture to this delightful starter. The main, carved roast fillet of Black Angus beef, braised oxtail, fondant potato and cep mushroom jus is as it sounds, a great dish for a cold night. Fillet of beef is an expensive cut that is sometimes overlooked by chefs, not only because of its price, but it can lack flavour. The fillet cooked by Shannon is perfectly done and obviously well-rested, it's rare in the middle and has an almost creamy texture full of beefiness and yet is meltingly tender. The oxtail offers a rich lift and the jus adds an inherent earthiness. Although relatively simple, this is the best beef dish I've had in a couple of years. We finish with a lemongrass and ginger creme brulee. Traditionalists may cringe, but I see this as a Wilson good-to-be-home dish, a modern Aussie rendition of one of the most celebrated of all desserts to come out of France. Served chilled with a crunchy caramelised lid and no adornments or frills, it is light and fresh with balanced spices and is a glorious finish to our meal.

Quarter is small and sits around 50 with room for another 20 outside in the arcade. There are banquettes, contemporary furniture and the bar at the far end of the room is where the action is. It's licensed and has a clever wine list that's well-priced. Lighting is dim at dinner, especially in the corner banquette area where we are, so with an increase in wattage (the food and wine deserve it) and better stemware, I could lift Quarter into my top drawer of diners in the west. At the moment though, it is still pretty damn good. 93-95 William St, Perth; phone (08) 9322 2424.

Try to find a weekday lunch parking spot in a popular inner-suburban restaurant strip. It's close to impossible, so I checked out **West End Deli** in West Perth for a quick meeting. Only a couple of clicks from the CBD, it stands commercially alone among older housing. We find a spot for our car only 50m from the door and there are about 30 inside enjoying lunch and the rustic casual atmosphere. A couple of new-release wines are on our agenda and we grab a small table



outside on the path in balmy conditions. Although there are takeaways available, this deli is more a cafe, but the luncheon menu is tiny and you need a catholic palate to dine here. I choose a morcilla sausage (pig's blood, rice and onion), with potato pieces, bacon and a just-cooked fried egg on top. The dish is a cholesterol nightmare and although light in weight it's full of flavour and the accompanying home-made baguette slices are great at mopping up the residue. It would be a terrific hangover cure but, to this clear-headed contributor, it's a robust meal for lunch. West End prices are reasonable and it is BYO, which suits us with our wines. 95 Carr St, West Perth; phone (08) 9328 3605.

Adding to the explosion of new small bars **The Suite**, a sister of Mt Hawthorn's **The Cabin**, has opened in Shenton Park. The decor is busy, with an open fireplace, chesterfields and old Indian-look furniture. 210 Nicholson Rd, Shenton Park; phone (08) 9381 2170.

Above: Quarter Restaurant/Cafe interior.