

## WHITE SALT is refreshing

With an inventive and fluid menu, impeccable service and affable surroundings quite simply, Tim Leech (originally a UK-trained chef), well... he *gets it right*. He and wife Claire are running a tight ship, that's clear to see. Constant and recent accolades (2006/07/08 Gold Plate Award - Licensed Free-standing Cafe; and the 2008 Premier's Award for highest overall % score), will only further cement its reputation.

Tim believes training staff is vital. In fact, he oversees the WA Catering Institute's 'Student Waiter of the Year' competition. Many of his current staff are past winners. In a sea of mediocre service, it's nice to see someone placing equal importance on this side of the coin (not just food). Tim's secret is "consistency", and imbuing his staff with a sense of worth - in themselves and the industry. Hurrah!

Tim says many see White Salt as an uber-classy place, though he'd describe it as more of an upmarket cafe-bar-restaurant. It is elegant and chic but simple and warm too. Tim says he aims for "quality, fresh food, cooked to order, with great service, in a friendly, casual environment.

"It's not rocket science," he says.

"So many try too hard these days and end up getting the basics wrong."

At White Salt you *can* have a drink on the terrace without eating. There is live music every Sunday in summer. Everything is cooked to order. Head Chef Dave Thorton (from the UK ; originally Sous Chef for two years) makes all his own stocks, sauces, dressings from scratch. Most patrons are regular locals, hence the menu changes seasonally.

Overall, the menu has a coastal twist and is chiefly seafood, with big splashes of poultry and red meat, some decent vegetarian options, and an ever-changing kid-friendly menu (Tim has two kids). Breakfast and desserts offer classics and favourites done well. A standout dessert option (for two or four) is the Chocolate Fondue (yes, far out, groovy baby), with a huge plate of marshmallows, fruits and ice cream - c'est magnifique.

Dave served pan-seared sashimi-grade scallops, sitting on a petite salad of celeriac, apple, wholegrain mustard and crème fraiche, with black truffle vinaigrette. I hope that begins to convey the calibre of food on offer at White Salt. A perfect entree: contrast within contrast, with lots going on, and I loved the slender crunch of the apple. Tim matched up the Wairau River 2007 Pinot Gris (Marlborough, NZ) - a great white with a bit of body, and hurrah, not a cliché 'sav blanc'.

I adored the roast duck breast salad with its gourmet potatoes, orange segments, cherry tomatoes, asparagus and crispy leek garnish. The duck meat was something else; sliced well and ultra-moist. I loved Dave's ginger citrus dressing: lemon, lime and orange juice, with chilli, fish sauce, ginger and sesame oil. It wrapped itself around the meat, boosting the duck's rich flavours. The orange segments were genius; a welcome sporadic intrusion.

The Linley Valley pork rib-eye with its rustic potato salad of semi-dried tomatoes, bacon and broccolini was pure pleasure. The big, medieval-like hunks of pork were tender and juicy. The chunks of 'real' apple (instead of sloppy apple sauce) and the wholegrain mustard jus over top, simply,



made me happy, especially with a glass of the Wignall's 2007 Pinot Noir.

Dave served us, finally, Tasmanian salmon with lemon and herb crushed kipfler potatoes, wilted spinach, grilled prawns and a beguiling shellfish *foam*. The foam is labour-intensive; it turns into a lovely, light sauce for the luscious salmon flesh.

White Salt won't disappoint - it's got style without the pretence. Most of all I like how *real* everything is, from Tim and the staff, to the food and the gorgeous sea air that engulfs it. All the best for the future and keep up the great work.

By Shenade Unicomb

