



food&wine

restaurantreview

# restaurant SANCTUARY - PEPPERED WITH STYLE

**N**estled in the heart of the Hunter Valley is Peppers Guest House. A much loved favourite as the perfect weekend getaway or short break, it also houses Restaurant Sanctuary. Peppers Guest House is ideally located two hours north of Sydney



and first opened its doors in 1984 as the very first Peppers Retreat. Surrounded by beautiful gardens and overlooking vineyards with an intimate relaxed atmosphere, the comfort and elegance of the accommodation is superb.

Restaurant Sanctuary (formerly Chez Pok) has a reputation for exceptional fine food and wine and on our visit it lived up to its reputation. The focus is on quality and whilst sophisticated it has simple flavours using local and seasonal produce. The ambience is warm and relaxed with what some say a touch of art nouveau romance. The black baroque furniture is complemented by engraved glass mirrors and flamboyant lighting throughout. A classic 'fine dining' experience.

Under the expert eye of Executive Chef Michael Bolam the kitchen produces a superb a la carte menu, or if you prefer try Michael's exciting Degustation with matching wines. The degustation menu is very reasonably priced at \$95 per person or, for an additional \$35 per person, each course can be beautifully matched with specially selected wines. For those staying overnight you must try the Peppers Guest House's signature breakfast bread and butter pudding.

Interestingly Michael commenced his career as an apprentice Chef at Restaurant Sanctuary (then named Chez Pok), in 2004 and in July 2005 Michael was offered the position of Sous Chef at another highly awarded local restaurant, Shakey Tables at which I have dined on many occasions.

The lunch menu we experienced was as expected - great. For sharing we very much enjoyed the 'Iberico Jamon' (for two) served with Wild Mushrooms, Marinated Kalamata Olives, Local 'Pukara Estate' Chilli Oil and Sourdough. For the mains the Venison Carpaccio with Mixed Mushrooms, Split Peas, Radish and Marsala Caviar was followed by 'Redgate Farm' Quail served with, Wilted Spinach, Walnut and Apple Salad and Soft Shell Crab in Light Tempura with Green Mango and Paw Paw Salad, Nham Jim Dressing.

We also complemented our meal with fresh baked bread with local 'Pukara' olive oil and balsamic, spinach salad, parmesan, pine nut, orange dressing and of course golden Kipfler potatoes, sage and rosemary salt, walnut praline. What better way than to finish with a plate of local cheese.

**Restaurant Sanctuary is open seven days a week.**

**Breakfast: 7am-10am (Monday - Friday)**

**and 7:30am-10:30am (Saturday & Sunday)**

**Lunch: 12pm-2.30pm Dinner: 7pm-9pm**

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*Greg Bondar*

Food and Wine Editor

