

Above: The homemade gnocchi in a smoked salmon and vodka cream sauce entrée.
Main picture: The mustard herb crumbed veal loin with sautéed spinach and lyonnaise potatoes and a white wine sauce.
Below: Whole flounder on buttery mash potato, sprinkled with baby prawns and capers in a red wine jus.



Alchemy: The right chemistry!

We're at a time when we're supposed to be battenning down the hatches, buying in bulk, taking packed lunches to work and, above all, not eating out. But the masterminds behind Alchemy Restaurant and Bar seem to have, by some sort of magical spell, trickery, or just plain brilliance, evaded the effects of the economic downturn.

In a picture perfect location nestled on the bank of the Brisbane River next to the ever-elegant Customs House, and with an unspoilt view of the Story Bridge, you will find this über-chic restaurant thriving amid the cold, grey skyscrapers of Brisbane town.

Owners Brad and Angelica Jolly threw open their doors to us on a damp Friday night. The restaurant was fully booked and buzzing with excitement. On entry to this edgy restaurant you find strong contrasting colours and textures combining to create night glamour: striped, burnt orange lounges; metallic green walls; sheer crimson curtains, and a ruby red chandelier suspended from the ceiling.

The atmosphere and style is impressive, and the cooking is equally so.

With summer well forgotten we were anxious to find what bountiful comfort food offerings the cooler months had in store for us at Alchemy. We were not disappointed.

The menu, which incorporates modern Australian and Italian influences, is as to be expected from renown and gifted head chef Brad Jolly. Jolly has the Midas touch.



Add all the right ingredients, and you can have perfect chemistry, says **Roxanne Hilton.**

A selection of pumpkin, rye and olive breads were offered while we perused the menu and listened to the specials, with olive oil and balsamic vinegar on the table for dipping.

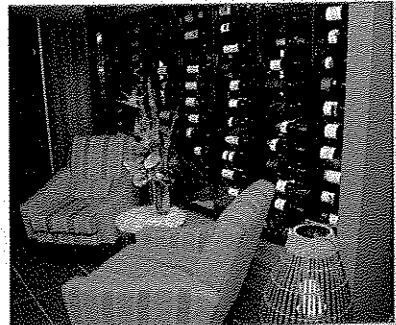
The entrée of tiny homemade gnocchi in a smoked salmon and vodka cream sauce was instantly addictive and irresistibly charming. We asked to share the entrée, and the kitchen was only too happy to accommodate our request with individual servings. With more than 10 choices from the entrée menu, others included mosaic game terrine with sauce gribiche, petit herbs and rye bread, and sashimi of king fish with pickled baby vegetables and split herb vinaigrette.

For the main, I could not go past the special of whole flounder served on buttery mash potato, sprinkled with baby prawns and capers in a red wine jus. I quickly forgave the bony fish

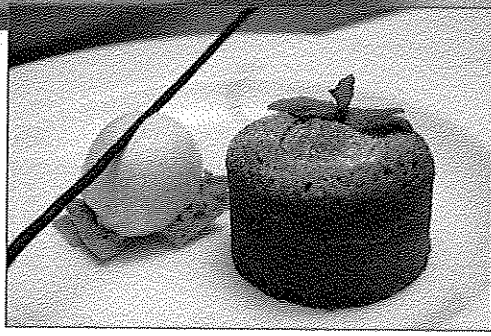
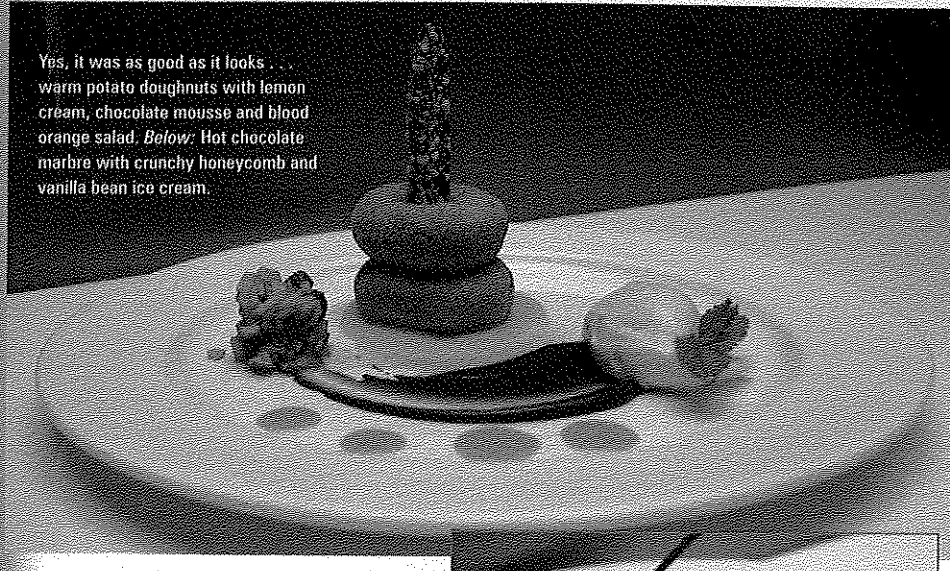
for its great inconvenience as the flavours were tantalisingly perfect. Also emerging from the kitchen was my friend's mustard herb crumbed veal loin with sautéed spinach and lyonnaise potatoes and a white wine sauce.

Other tempting dishes included the bluefin tuna grilled rare, with Jerusalem artichoke puree, green olives, confit tomato and chocolate caviar. Or perhaps try the duck breast with caramelised beetroot risotto, creamed spinach with a white wine jus.

Alchemy also gives diners the option of enjoying a caviar experience which includes 30 grams of caviar and either a glass of champagne or three shots of vodka per person for the tidy sum of \$350 per person. >>



Yes, it was as good as it looks... warm potato doughnuts with lemon cream, chocolate mousse and blood orange salad. Below: Hot chocolate marbre with crunchy honeycomb and vanilla bean ice cream.



>> Interestingly, I could not find any vegetarian options on the a la carte main menu, although I would presume that the kitchen would accommodate any dietary requirements.

As for the liquid menu, the lists are extensive and beyond comprehensive. From the wines offered by the glass, bottle or from the walk-in cellar reserve, even the most discerning diner will find a most satisfying accompaniment to their meal.

Now to the sweet end of the menu – luscious, indulgent desserts. Diners have a choice of nine desserts with the addition of the new liquid nitrogen gastronomic nibbles, which was explained by our waitress as the opportunity to go into the kitchen to try the full Alchemy experience of an assortment of food samples snap-frozen by liquid nitrogen. There is also a wide range of local and international cheeses for those who do not have a sweet tooth.

Goopy warm centre

However, I could not go past the first option on the menu, being hot chocolate marbre with crunchy honeycomb and vanilla bean ice cream. The cake was light and fluffy with a goopy warm centre, and the bitterness of the cocoa sublimely complimented the sugary icecream and honeycomb. Intrigue got the better of my friend, and she ordered the warm

Erratum: Last month I wrote that the union of love and food had created Kiss Fine Food. However, as a family lawyer I have come to expect that good unions do not always last, and unfortunately in this case love and food have parted ways, thus resulting in the closure of the restaurant. Word that this union had ended was not received until after the review was printed.

potato doughnuts with lemon cream, chocolate mousse and blood orange salad. The doughnuts were art on a plate. It's clear – you can never have enough of a good thing but boy is it hard to fit it all in.

Like a breath of fresh air, the staff go about their job unpretentiously but with enough cheek to make the night memorable. Struggling to finish everything on my dessert plate, one waiter audaciously refused to clear my plate, bringing back memories of my childhood at the family dinner table. Even when I would put the plate on the edge of the table, he would walk past after clearing other tables and push the plate back towards me.

The staff clearly enjoy friendly banter amongst themselves, with Sarah, our capable waitress for the evening, rolling her eyes at Mr Audacious and giving a bit of talk-to-the-hand attitude while remarking to me “part of my job description is rolling people out to the ferry afterwards”. At Alchemy you feel cared for rather than processed.

While a lunch or evening visit will put a dint in your wallet, lawyers and others in the financial and commercial precinct of the Brisbane CBD can consider themselves spoiled, as they have an incredible dining experience just around the corner.

I commend Alchemy to all those who enjoy superb food, an inviting atmosphere and excellent service. ■

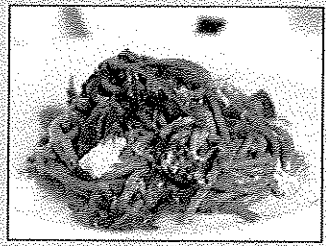
This recipe appears courtesy of Alchemy's Angelica and Brad Jolly

Spaghetti with goat cheese & rocket salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 250g wholemeal spaghetti pasta
- 1 punnet of cherry tomato (ripe)
- 250g rocket leaves, washed
- 6 tbs extra virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 300g goat cheese
- 250g spinach, washed
- 80g grated parmesan
- 100ml extra virgin olive oil
- salt/pepper to season



Method

Blanch the spinach in salted boiling water for 2 minutes, strain then refresh in cold water. Strain then dry spinach on paper towelling, gently pressing out excess water. In a food processor process spinach with parmesan until combined, remove and set aside. Boil the pasta in salted water for 8 to 10 minutes until al dente (offers slight resistance when bitten, not soft or overdone), strain, keep warm. Heat oil in a non-stick frypan, add garlic and cherry tomatoes, sauté until garlic is just colouring. Season to taste. Add pasta to pan, then pureed spinach, toss until the pasta is incorporated through the sauce. Take off the heat and stir through goat's cheese. To serve, divide the pasta onto plates, top with rocket and remaining parmesan. ■

Alchemy Restaurant & Bar

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mail@alchemyrestaurant.com.au

Web: www.alchemyrestaurant.com.au

Hours: Lunch – Monday to Friday 12 noon to 3pm; Dinner – Monday to Friday 6pm to 10pm, Saturday 6pm til late.

Bookings recommended

Liquor status: Licenced

Prices (dinner a la carte):

Entrees: \$26 to \$28

Mains: \$38 to \$46

Desserts: \$12 to \$17

Rating: 18/20

Roxanne Hilton is a solicitor with de Korte Lawyers, Eight Mile Plains.