

# The Independent Weekly

South Australia, August 15th - 21st, 2008



## THE KITCHEN DOOR

At Penny's Hill and Mr. Riggs Cellars,  
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OPEN lunch seven days

## EAT by Ann Oliver

# JEWEL IN THE CROWN

You have to wonder if there is any worth whatsoever in the South Australian Restaurant and Catering Association awards. The Kitchen Door was marked down as not being value for money. Not value for money? What planet do the reviewers live on? Clearly not earth or Adelaide and definitely not the eastern states!

\$50 for five courses, \$65 with stunning wine matches, about the price of a main course of the same quality in Sydney! Less expensive than some Adelaide cafés serving sour old cheap pasta that has been sitting uncovered in the fridge for way too long.

Add good glassware, linen tablecloth and serviette and floor staff that are not just professional but passionate about the food, wine and their place of employment. Perhaps their reviewers prefer their steak embellished with nasty Chinese asparagus and re-fried potatoes, because from The Kitchen Door's a la cart menu it comes perfectly cooked, plain with a good Bearnaise and a wedge of lemon just the way we like it.

Slightly more expensive are the sides but these are still incredible value for money; vegetables with some work in them like roasted root vegetables or sautéed wild broccoli, baby spinach and chard with garlic and chilli.

Restaurant manager James Spreadbury and chef Ben Sommariva have added a jewel to regional South Australian dining. An uncluttered room with good art, a view onto emerald green paddocks, slip-rail fences and fat bottomed Suffolk sheep, almond blossom, and a single little cutie pie lamb bumping against the adults demanding attention. It was just gorgeous!

Two visits and they have served the only oysters we have had this season that were stated as "just shucked" and actually were. Do chefs think we can't tell the difference? A just shucked oyster moves, wriggles; it is live, slippery slimy and divine. Chef Sommariva has evolved from the scrawny larrikin to a beefed up daddy with two kids and the same gorgeous girlfriend Tamara.

His passion for produce is evident. His food is not overworked and superbly respectful to the produce he uses.

Celeriac and potato soup with lentil pearls and walnut oil was hot and delicious, but spoiled only because I detest lemon thyme. Our Chinese guest adored it.

Scallop carpaccio with lobster liver mayonnaise looked pretty and tasted great. Hindmarsh Valley Chevre with house-baked walnut rye and fresh pear and parsnip chips was perfect. Simplicity, freshness and seasonality at its absolute best, we loved this dish.

Chicken rotolo with fresh Tasmanian black truffle, rolled with cavolo nero and chestnut puree, served with local baby carrots was succulent and perfectly cooked and the carrots scrumptious. Simple individual flavours perfectly cooked.

Braised Normanville lamb neck, local organic Brussels sprouts with Hamlet's bacon and creamed horseradish was tender, succulent and superb. The emphasis on fresh in the menu wording seems pointless – we would expect nothing less from Sommariva.

The chocolate soufflé was ordered. It looked terrific but its height was an indication of the flavour, diminished slightly with too much egg white but better than 99 per cent of the hot, tasteless meringue currently being served as soufflé in Adelaide.

Years ago the wonderfully pernicky Joan Campbell (food editor of Vogue Entertaining until she was 84), who terrified every chef in Australia with her generally justified criticisms, remarked, "Anyone can make a high soufflé, very few people can make a good one." How right she was.

But these are just minor comments, we love The Kitchen Door.

WINE: Terrific!



Mr. Riggs