



RESTAURANT OF THE WEEK

3 October 2008

Wai

This restaurant has pride of place on *Queenstown's* waterfront on the wharf, cheek by jowl with the famed *Earnslaw* steamship and her disgorging passengers.

The red funnel and well oiled wood of the famous white lady take up the entire view from the window, then reveal a close view of the blue lake and *The Remarkables* in full grandeur. It's a compelling sight, changing from picture postcard full sun shining on blue lake and tops of mountains, to a dark and forbidding alpine scene with clouds moving in to white/grey out.

But don't be fooled into thinking this is a tourist-orientated joint.

Wai (Maori word for water) is the top restaurant in *Queenstown*, with consistently creative and high quality food and service. No visit to *Queenstown* is complete without a visit here for lunch or dinner (except in June, when the restaurant closes for 3 weeks for R&R).

There's an extensive a la carte menu, a separate oyster menu and a *Chef's Degustation*. Chef Martin James excels himself with this innovative menu - featuring regional produce, a perfectly-balance of 7- courses, which is just the right length.

FC has no patience with Tasting menus that are blow-out banquets, damaging to health and wasteful of food.

Tasting menu Degustation \$117.00, \$175 with matching wines

The banquet begins with an Amuse Boche of *Tomato with Gaspacho oil* from Verona, followed by an exquisite appetizer of a *Trio of Oysters served three ways - with Pink Onion Shallot; on Bacon foam; and natural - with Chardonnay vinegar & Mandarin oil, served on warm salt piles.*

The next dish is pleasing to both eye and palate - *Salmon & Swordfish Carpaccio* with citrus oil reduction, arranged in a rectangle chequerboard served with a *Prawn Tartare and Capers.*

A signature dish of *Scampi Bisque* arrives *in the form of a Prawn sitting in a large hat dish, veiled with Prawn Jelly, with a rich Prawn Broth* poured over it at table. Next course is a sensational fusion of flavours in a dish of *Northern Scallops with a Pea & Scallop Risotto* with tiny bits of bacon. Then a *Quail Spagetti Carbonara, topped by a Parma Ham-wrapped Quail Egg.*

Main course could be a rich dish of *Bendigo Hare, served 3 ways – the shank braised on a White Bean Puree, with Summer Beans, Baked Rack on Potato Gratin with braised French Lentils and a baby Rocket Salad, plus a Hare Wellington.*

FC has tasted a substituted *Trio of Duck* – for this course, which was equally sensational, served with mouth-watering *Vanilla Ravioli.*

Saved by interesting sorbet combination of *Pinot Noir and Raspberry/Strawberry* with some *Balsamic Vinegar jelly* – tummy soothing in readiness for the dessert of another trio - *Chocolate Odyssey – a small Chocolate Steamed pudding, Round of sumptuous ice cream* and melt-in-your-mouth Moorish *Chocolate Mousse.*

A befitting wine list features top New Zealand vintages such as *Pegasus Bay Sauvignon Semillion 2006* and *Mt Edward Pinot Noir 2006.* Superb service and attention to detail of presentation and delivery top off your experience at *Wai.*



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Chef Martin James has assembled a long-standing team that sustains the quality of the restaurant. The Team of Chefs are having a long term love affair with both the cuisine – which shows! and the physical attractions of the region – the joie de vivre of snowboarding, skiing and fly fishing..

Open daily for Lunch 12pm – 2.30pm Dinner 6pm – 10pm. Closed mid-June for 3 weeks

Absolute Waterfront, Steamer Wharf
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www.wai.net.nz