

FOOD STUFF

By Andrew Dembina

Australian Asian

Lotus

37-43 Pottinger Street, Central, tel: 2543 6290.

Thai food cooked by an Australian? Unexpected, perhaps, but it is through Thai and Indonesian cuisine that young chef Will Meyrick carved out a reputation at Longrain and Jimmy Liks, two of Sydney's most admired modern Asian bar-cum-restaurants. Lotus, a new establishment in Hong Kong of the same ilk, has had its menu devised by Meyrick. Based on the street food of Southeast Asia – but mostly Thailand and Indonesia – each dish is authentic to its region. No fusion here.

Lotus also has a very cool cocktail bar – so cool that its drinks' master is referred to as a 'mixologist'. Grant Collins, a revered British barman, has been behind several award-winning concoctions and bars in the UK and Australia, where he has been living for the past five years. His consulting work has also taken him to Japan and Bali. Pushing boundaries



Smoked trout betel leaf with dried shrimp and trout roe

in Hong Kong. Collins has introduced 'charred' cocktails, in which the fruit is first char-grilled. These include caramelised lime daiquiri and burnt lemon and vanilla margarita. Toasted pink grapefruit martini uses caramelised grapefruit, lemon, gin, Cointreau and a hint of lemongrass. Non-charred signatures include 'apple-



Crispy pork hock with tamarind plum sauce



Lotus has a very cool cocktail bar

flower' foam – vodka, apple liqueur, elderflower cordial, sauvignon blanc, nitrogen-charged lemongrass and a long-lasting apple foam head. Premium spirits are used throughout.

Like the cocktail list, the food listings mix plenty of ingredients that impose on the taste buds. A signature starter of smoked trout with dried shrimp galangal is topped with large orange balls of ocean trout roe and served on a betel leaf – the diner should wrap it much like a pancake. At first, it all tastes very salty, but then the fresh herbs and chilli become apparent. This multi-level taste experience applies to much of Meyrick's menu. Kaffir lime-cured prawn with shredded coconut, mint and Thai fishcake is such an example, with sweet, salty and hot sensations all arriving separately. Less layered in flavour is a salad of crispy salmon with watermelon, ginger, Thai basil and roasted chilli and shallot dressing – here the chilli dominates.

A main dish of crispy whole fish with pineapple 'three-flavoured sauce' is mildly spicy and widely appealing. Also very impressive is crispy pork hock, served with tamarind plum sauce and Thai fish sauce. Desserts include ginger caramel custard with grilled banana and sticky rice; black sticky rice with lychee and coconut cream, and young coconut jelly with sago, jackfruit and crushed ice.

Cocktails and food here will charm many; the contemporary design is warm rather than painfully hip, and the atmosphere very relaxed. The restaurant opens for both lunch and dinner.