

Rockpool Bar & Grill

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The Dinner Club has expanded! 8 people were present for our first 2 chef hat experience. Rockpool Bar & Grill is Neil Perry's latest restaurant – a steakhouse. My initial thoughts before entering the restaurant revolved around the idea of “how good could a steak possible be”? This question will be addressed below.

The restaurant itself is unassuming on the outside – it was, after all, a former bank. However, once on the inside, you can see why it proclaims itself as having “Australia's most beautiful dining room.” The pictures taken of the restaurant (available on the website) are only an indication of exactly how beautiful the layout is.

Review

Entrée

Four Raw Tastes of the Sea

The first thing you notice about Rockpool Bar & Grill's menu is that it is large – there are just so many choices on that A3 piece of cardboard and all sounded so good. In the end, I managed to narrow the choices down to the roast squid and pork belly or the sashimi (“Four Raw Tastes of the Sea”). I was a bit reluctant to order sashimi in a steakhouse, but the name of the dish reminded me of Quay's “Sea Pearls”:



Quay - Sea Pearls



Rockpool Bar & Grill – Four Raw Tastes of the Sea

In the end, the “four raw tastes of the sea” were a poor substitute for Quay's rendition. The presentation was superb and the taste was intense, but nothing like Quay's. I mean, just look at those Sea Pearls!

The four “raw tastes” served were (from left to right):

- **Ocean trout** with preserved lemon salsa
- Cerviche of **Swordfish**- citrus base marinade
- **Yellow fin tuna** dressed in julienne of ginger, jalapeno and coriander
- **Hiramasa kingfish** dressed with tea-smoked oysters

Each dual sashimi portions had an intense spice or acidic accompaniment which added to the flavour of the fresh sashimi. Don't get me wrong, this dish was great, it's just that my expectations were very high. Damn you Quay!

I tasted some of Mich's entrée (the roast squid and pork belly) and it was very juicy – although that could have been due to the fat content or the pork. In the end, I think that the squid and pork was a better choice, but I was still satisfied, although not blown away, with the sea taste.

*Did you know that blue fin tuna is on the verge of extinction due to sashimi farming?
(Rockpool Bar and Grill served yellow fin tuna, no blue fin tuna).*

Main Course

Rangers Valley Dry Aged 300 Day Grain Fed Rib-eye on the Bone 440g + 72 day

Alternatively, this course could be renamed "Michael's Best Steak Ever" or even "World's Best Steak".

It was quite simply the best steak I have ever had in my life (incidentally, it was also the most expensive steak I have ever had in my life). After trading small slices for Mich's Wagyu Rump Grade 9 (a very small slice, he was not content with just taking my truffle on Monday...) and Pauline's Dry Aged Grass-Fed Rib-Eye, I could only help feeling that they were completely inferior to mine. The fact that they could charge over \$100 for a Wagyu steak when this one came in at a much more affordable price is a travesty!

The steak was cooked to perfection – medium-rare, tender and it melted in your mouth. There was nothing special done to the meat itself – no sauces added, just cooked in its own juices – that's all that was required to make this piece of meat spectacular.

I was tossing up between the free range chicken and a steak and had to go with my gut instinct of "steak in a steakhouse". Needless to say, I am delighted with my choice and will do it again without hesitation. When you feel that a \$68 steak is actually decent value at the end of the meal, you must have had one great steak.

*Did you know that I am allergic to beef?
Yes, I will go there again for that steak (armed with an antihistamine)!*

Sides

Charcoal Oven Roast Pumpkin and Sweet Potato with Garlic Yoghurt and Burnt Butter and Kipfler Potatoes Sautéed with Wagyu Fat and Rosemary

I regret ordering these side dishes now – *see next section on Dessert*. Both these side dishes were so heavy and had so much substance! The dishes themselves were alright – I really liked the sautéed potatoes (as Revsion said, "you can really taste the wagyu fat"), but found the pumpkin and sweet potato pretty standard. Then again, anything would taste pretty standard compared to that steak. Did I mention that I loved the steak?

Dessert

N/A

Oh my gosh, I have never skipped on dessert intentionally. I was just so full. If I had attempted it, the meal would have ended in disaster. As it was, I was pleasantly full and very happy after the main course.

Ratings

Food Quality 9/10

Overall taste was superb. I completely forgot about the disappointment of the entrée once the mains came. A 9.75/10 for the steak alone, almost perfection! It is, however, hard to see how anything can top it.

Value 6/10

I ended up paying a fair bit for the meal. The steak aside, the other elements of the meal were overpriced for what they were. The four tastes of the sea were mid-\$20s for barely 8 slices while the sides weren't that crash hot. 4/10 for value without the steak – good steak!

Ambiance 8/10

This score is affected by our seating location. The photo of the kitchen area was from my seat – we were very close to the kitchen. Throughout the night, it was rather smoky from all of those steaks on the grill. The restaurant design itself was superb and the atmosphere was excellent (see photo of Peter Costello), but the proximity to the kitchen area was a downer.

Cleanliness 9.5/10

Very clean restaurant. Dropped half a point because it wasn't as clean as the other fine dining restaurants we've been to.

Service 9/10

Polite wait staff – what we expect now from these restaurants! Marked down after they took away my bread plate without noticing I hadn't finished my bread... Other than that, faultless restaurant.