

### Back on the main menu

- Font size: **Decrease** (#) **Increase** Article from: [\(http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/\)](http://www.news.com.au/adelaidenow/)
- Email article: **Email** ([adelaidenow@email/popup/0,22617,24315007-5006349,00.html](mailto:adelaidenow@email/popup/0,22617,24315007-5006349,00.html))
- Print article: **Print** ([javascript.print\(\);](#))

**The Advertiser**

SIMON WILKINSON  
September 10, 2008 12:00am

#### **A NEW, contemporary approach has returned Chloe's to its place among the elite of Adelaide fine dining.**

From that first, ambrosial sip of rabbit consomme, it is clear something is up.

The brown liquor is pure and cleansing, its mild, sweet gaminess sharpened with a drop or two of lemon juice.

In the centre of the bowl is a small envelope of fine, silky pasta swollen with shreds of rabbit meat. And that's it. As pure and delicious an expression of rabbit as could be. Now if a bunny had been unfortunate enough to end up in the kitchen of Chloe's in days gone by, it would have been wrapped in a pastry crust, perhaps, or ground into a farce, or doused in a creamy sauce. Maybe all three.

The old Chloe's often seemed intimidated by its own reputation and grandeur. It tried too hard to make an impression. The new Chloe's is clever, contemporary and far more comfortable in its own skin. At its best, in dishes such as a stunning marron, the risotto and the veal, it is right there among our elite dining experiences. I don't think I've enjoyed a meal as much - the whole package, that is - for some time.

Remarkably, this metamorphosis has taken place with the same key players in control.

Owner Nick Papazahariakis first opened the impressive front door at Chloe's 25 years ago, naming it after his fashion-designer daughter. He is a restaurant legend, recognised by his place in the industry's hall of fame. That he has survived (occasionally thrived) for such a time is testament to his commitment, passion and bloody-mindedness.

Perhaps it is the stubborn streak that stopped him changing course in the kitchen much sooner. The fact that he has now done so with such gusto shows the measure of the man.

My past review of Chloe's, four years ago, was one of the hardest I have written. I knew it would be taken to heart. But the service that night was inexperienced and the food mostly disappointing (souffle in a soggy pastry crust, overcooked asparagus under a parmesan crust).

The chef then, as now, was Johnny Triscari. What battles have been waged over the culinary direction we'll never know, but the chef once bogged down in heavy sauces and pastry crusts now seems completely assured in handling the excellent produce he is given. This is also a kitchen that does the hard yards, making its own bread and sausages, pickling its own olives. Flavours are clear and balanced, often inspired, and the plating still has the wow factor expected of a special-occasion restaurant.

And special it is. Stepping into the entrance hall here can feel like a visit to a wealthy aunt or a gallery. The carpets are dark and the drapes heavy. Salmon walls have contrasting cornices. Art (mostly dark) comes in gilded frames. There's even a cherub or two. Hopefully, the decor may one day follow the lead of the kitchen and lighten up a little. The real danger is that these ostentatious surroundings can set the tone - there's nothing worse than sitting in a room of diners speaking in whispers. Fortunately, on our Thursday-night visit, there is a large, central table of young'uns, who are effusive about the whole experience.

And what's not to love when dinner begins with a complimentary amusee, those home-baked rolls in a choice of three flavours and a pair of entrees which would sit easily on the best tables here or anywhere.

The first is a small mound of squid-ink risotto that arrives hidden beneath a shroud formed from translucent slices of raw scallops. The heat of the rice has just started to turn the scallop slices milky, and in the mouth they have a delicate, barely-there texture. It looks spectacular and, with the firm rice grains, the swampy black juices and two whole seared scallops, is even better to eat.

For pure visual appeal, however, the marron stands tall - literally. The marron is kept live in the kitchen and killed to order. Perhaps that explains why our beastie is looking particularly surly. It has been split in half, one piece containing the sweet grilled tail meat, the other, looking to the skies, a luscious seafood mousse. A little stack of potato slices, a duck jus and crispy duck skin complete a

brilliant example of contemporary dining.

Other entrees hold the standard. I love that consomme and a rare quail breast partnered by the delicate bite and earthy aromas of truffle noodles. Only venison sausages miss top points, two of them plonked in a pastry box filled with a layer of chestnut paste. It looks and tastes, well, brown.

Each of these entrees has been matched to a different glass of wine. This is another area that Nick Pap has overhauled. Chloe's has always had one of the country's finest cellars of aged Australian wines, but the selection was based on traditional stalwarts and little was available by the glass. Now Nick has embraced the new wave of food-friendly varieties such as arneis, alborino and tempranillo, and offers much of it by the glass. Bravo.

As is often the case, main courses don't quite keep the dazzling pace. A veal dish is the exception, showing what can be achieved when chef and producer (in this case, Cleland Veal) are on the same page. Slices of rump are indecently young and tender, but they pale beside the cutlet with its melting flesh and milky tang. It's sublime, with the subtle saltiness of anchovy melted into the sauce.

A crisp-skinned mullock fillet sits on a tumble of green lentils, slices of house-made chorizo and local cockles still plump with their salty juices. There's an echo of paella here in a satisfying seafood dish.

The duck trio brings together a consomme spiked with Asian flavourings; a pie of good, flaky pastry filled with confit; and slices of rare breast. Each of the components is well executed but they seem to have little in common other than coming from the same bird.

We finish by sharing two of the desserts. A striped ribbon of iridescent persimmon and mascarpone ice creams between two pastry layers looks straight from the lolly shop and is the perfect frivolous finish. We also love the honey baba, served dunked in a warm tea syrup.

Yes, Chloe's has lightened up and there seems plenty of life in the old girl yet. For all the accolades he and the restaurant have received over the past 25 years, I reckon this is Nick Pap's greatest achievement.

## THE RESTAURANT

**Chloe's Restaurant**  
36 College Rd, Kent Town  
Phone: 8362 2574 ([www.chloes.com.au](http://www.chloes.com.au) (<http://www.chloes.com.au>))

Lunch: Noon-2.30pm, Mon-Fri.  
Dinner: 6.30-10pm, Mon-Sat.  
Seating: 50 (plus private rooms and function centre). Wheelchair access and facilities.  
Owner: Nick Papazahariakis.  
Chef: Johnny Triscari.

## THE VERDICT

### THE BILL

Entrees: \$24.50-\$33.50.  
Mains: \$34.50-\$39.50.  
Desserts: \$18.50-\$19.50.  
Vegetarian options: Yes.

**Wine list:** One of the best collections of aged Australian wines is now supplemented by more contemporary food-friendly varieties. Good selection by the glass.

Corkage: \$20

## SUMMARY

Chloe's is flying again, its new-look menus, superior cellar and faultless service making it among our very best high-end dining experiences. Highly recommended.

**Score: 17.5/20**

Score guide: Score Guide: Below 10: Awful. 10-11: Passable. 11-12: Fair. 12-13: Something going for it. 13-14: Good. 14-15: Recommended. 15-16: Special. 16-17: Excellent. 17-18: Outstanding. 18-19: Brilliant. 20: Perfect.

## Share this article

[What is this?](#) (#) (#)

- **Add to MySpace** (*javascript:GetThis('AdelaideNow... Back on the main menu', 'http://prelive.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,24315007-5006349,00.html', 1)*)
- **Digg it** (*http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http://prelive.news.com.au/adelaidenow/story/0,22606,24315007-5006349,00.html&title=Back on the main menu | AdelaideNow*)