

Fitting finale

Come for the Portuguese treats and stay for dessert

WORDS PETRA FRIESER



Karma Waters Restaurant is nestled among a cluster of restaurants on the corner strip of The Esplanade and Venning St in Mooloolaba.

The evening mood, shades of red and subtle lighting made for a lovely ambience as we readied ourselves for some treats. While Karma Waters is open for breakfast and lunch, we chose to have dinner.

The menu has a strong Portuguese influence that made for some difficult decision-making so the Karma Waters tasting plate for two (\$28) as a starter seemed a happy compromise. It had natural oysters, which I asked to swap with the

oysters Portuguese (extra \$3) because I was on a bit of a Portuguese roll and wanted to keep in theme. There were also pan-fried chilli prawns and calamari, the yummiest zucchini fritters that sat on a swirl of peri-peri aioli, and Portuguese meatballs in a rich tomato herb sauce. The platter came with complimentary sangrias, which was a nice touch. Almost as nice as the 2009 Tamar Ridge Devil's Corner pinot noir (\$32 a bottle), a Tasmanian wine recommended by our helpful waitress as a nice, somewhat lighter red of which I really could taste the hints of black cherry.



I wanted to try the Portuguese Espetada (\$25) as I took it to be the signature dish on the menu. You know, Portuguese experience and all. This dish is quite a dramatic one as far as presentation goes. With a choice of either rump or chicken, the sections of meat are impaled by a rapier-like skewer that dangles from an unusual cast iron hanging device. Never one to adhere to sensible dining etiquette, the temptation was too great not to seize my novelty rapier from its hanger once its cargo had been devoured and challenge my defenceless dining buddy to a duel, which she

graciously declined because of the absence of her own duelling device.

Silliness aside, the meal itself was really enjoyable. The chicken was lovely and tender, and topped with a delicious peri-peri sauce that had just the right amount of chilli bite. It also came with a salad and some fabulously crispy chips.

My dining buddy was quite enamoured with her choice of seared cajun barramundi (\$25), which came served on a bed of roast pumpkin, baby spinach and "sticky" onion cloaked with a beurre blanc sauce.

I made a conscious decision at the start of my meal to leave ample room for dessert. Lately I have almost been bursting at the seams come dessert time, and it is very difficult to appreciate the finer intricacies of a dessert when you are struggling to remain upright and keep your eyes open.

Fortunately the wine and sangria had enlivened me somewhat, and both my starter and main were just the right-sized portions to ensure this, so dessert it was.

We chose to share the chocolate mousse (\$9) and ordered a chai latte (\$4.50) each to finish off. While it probably was not in any way a Portuguese finale, I am not about to complain. The chocolate mousse was more of a layered slice where the topping was a thick lather of creamy chocolate mousse on layers of whipped chocolate ganache and sponge.

Karma Waters made for a lovely evening. The waves crashing in the background added to the ambience and I enjoyed my introduction to Portuguese food.

But if you want to hear more than waves crashing, they do have live music on many evenings throughout the week, which would certainly warrant another visit.

Petra Frieser's visit was unannounced and she paid for her own meal and beverages



FOOD FACTS

Karma Waters Restaurant, Shop 5, Mantra International Building, cnr The Esplanade & Venning St, Mooloolaba, 5452 6722

Open Seven days, breakfast, lunch and dinner

Cuisine Modern Australian with a Portuguese influence

Cost Starters \$7-28, mains \$17-32, dessert \$9

Verdict Great introduction to Portuguese food