

## sydney grapevine

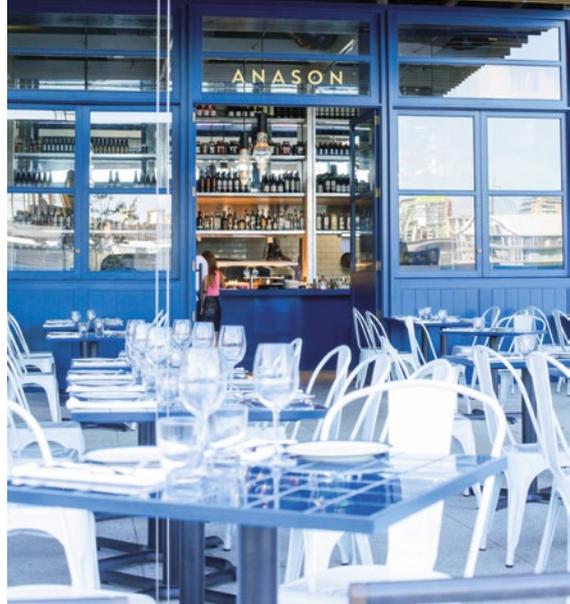
ELISABETH KING

THE worst Turkish meal I have ever eaten was in Glasgow. The poor chef was desperately trying to create lush Mediterranean flavours with the “wrong” onions and meat bereft of the melting tenderness associated with top flight Turkish food. Fortunately, Sydney has a plentiful supply of the right ingredients to fuel the current wave of new generation Turkish restaurants and one of the best of the current crop is **Anason**. The first restaurant to open on Wulugul Walk in the Barangaroo development, the stunning fit out slots into the waterfront Anadara building. Designed by interiors expert George Livissianis, large ceiling lanterns, woven cane chairs and a deep blue background punctuated with concrete, steel and mirrors recreate the sort of atmosphere found in contemporary Istanbul restaurants such as Changa and X Restaurant and Bar. Such all-round superiority is a given when the man in charge is **Somer Sivrioglu**, the renowned chef and cookbook author whose Efendy restaurant in Balmain kickstarted the current passion for modern Turkish cuisine. Sivrioglu has assembled an amazing team of young Turk chefs, including **Murat Buvan** from Attica in Melbourne, **Ozge Donmezoglu**, formerly of gram in Istanbul, and **Inal Erdener** (ex 29 in Istanbul). A hiring policy that clearly shows with the arrival of the pillowy saj pita bread and sesame sumit with pumpkin humus. A satisfying nibble as you peruse the wine list. Sivrioglu has put together one of the most interesting Turkish wine lists in town, including seven whites, two rosés and nine reds, nearly all available by the glass. I chose a full-flavoured Fumé Blanc 900 from Denizli, and my fellow diner picked a Cab Franc Merlot Petit Verdot R from Aydin. There's also an expertly edited beer and raki list for those keen to explore more of Turkey's alcohol heritage. We were off to a flyer with three share plates - heirloom tomatoes, crumbled feta and simit chips; octopus, beetroot and garden herbs kisir (an inspired take on the traditional cracked wheat salad) and cured salmon pastirma with zucchini and chilli oil. You can choose to have every dish placed on the table at once in the classic Turkish fashion, but



we opted to take a breather before the larger dishes appeared. Kofte are much maligned, but the beef kofte, white bean and tahini piyaz at Anason showcases how masterful the Turks are with minced meat. The mullet baked in paper, lemon and raki butter deserved its star billing. But the thrill of the night was the king prawns, spicy sujuk, mushroom, kashar cheese guvech. The sort of dish that conjures up memories of the fish restaurants under Galata Bridge across the Golden Horn. By way of living culture, a fitting end to a meal is sutlac, the fragrant Ottoman answer to rice pudding. The poached quince, sour apple snow and mascarpone also gave the thumbs up to the Turkish mission to Sydney. To complete the real McCoy experience, or whatever the Turkish equivalent is, don't leave without ordering coffee. Anason uses the finest Yemeni coffee beans, roasted locally, to add that final touch of integrity if any more is even necessary. Anason, Wulugul Walk, Barangaroo; phone (02) 9188 1581.

Authenticity is taken to the nth degree at **Bistrot Gavroche**. Owned by **Frederic Colin**, a French chef who runs a restaurant of the same name in Singapore, it has a real point-of-difference to the surrounding Asian and upscale contemporary restaurants of Sydney's most exciting new eat strip - Kensington St in Chippendale. More of a throwback than a homage to the French bistro tradition, the first floor venue, carved out of an historic rum warehouse, could have been put together by a movie set designer from the gleaming wood bar to the brass-railed seating and polished oak entrance. Sydney was once full of French restaurants, but not any more. Apart from Felix in the CBD, it's tough to track down classic French food. Some critics have slammed the approach as old fashioned. For some reason, they don't seem to have a problem with Asian, Italian and



Greek restaurants dishing up traditional favourites. While updated nursery food from transplanted British chefs unfailingly gets an automatic tick. Ignore many of the reviews and take Bistrot Gavroche for what it is. A great place to dine when you've had enough pasta, contemporary Chinese, Thai or fusion. Grandpa Henri's pork terrine en croute is terrific and so is the crab royale facon thermidor I ordered. Chef Colin references the old Les Halles tradition all the way - charcuterie plates, onion soup, bone marrow on sourdough bread and France's number one dish - steak and frites. Albeit, a ritzy version using Rangers Valley 270 days beef rump. Tarte Tatin, chocolate mousse and crepes suzette are pulling in a younger crowd who wouldn't even know they are supposed to be a cliché. Bistrot Gavroche, Level 1, 2-10 Kensington St, Chippendale; phone (02) 9218 6668.

Guillaume Brahimi isn't in the kitchen at **Four in Hand by Guillaume**. But his influence is pervasive in this joint venture with the Public House Management Group, from his fabled Paris Mash to the seared fish in parsley sauce. For over 10 years, celebrated chef **Colin Fassnidge** attracted a loyal clientele to this iconic Paddo pub and **Darrell Felstead** (ex Foveaux) continues to exert the same pull. The pork terrine here is actually rilletes. Dishes not to bypass are the quenelle of salmon mousse, baked potato mash (very different from the competing Paris Mash) and reuben cromesques, croquettes filled with sauerkraut and shredded corned beef. A reasonably priced wine list, European waitstaff and a welcoming interior have preserved the Four in Hand's rep as one of the hottest dining tickets in town. Four in Hand by Guillaume, 105 Sutherland St, Paddington; phone (02) 9326 2254. 🍷

*Above left:* Beetroot, cracked wheat kisir, melon balls from Anason restaurant.

*Above right:* Anason restaurant exterior.