

THE **Eastside Grill** acquired its liquor licence on the day we fronted up at the latest addition to the Kensington St eating precinct in Chippendale, aka Hippendale. But the New York-style grill with Japanese overtones has been buzzing from its late January opening date. Owned by the Greycliff Group, helmed by **Dr Stanley Quek**, the visionary behind the inner city area's revival, the interior alone scores a solid wow on entry. Chris Wilks, of Giant Design, has teamed bare brick walls, heritage arched windows, a leather panelled bar and a custom-made brass chandelier with a 10m mural by Caratoes, the famed Belgian street artist based in Hong Kong. Designed to evoke the edginess of NYC's Meatpacking District, the artwork showcases the Big Apple by night dotted with the city's yellow cabs. Executive chef **Stanley Wong** boasts a heritage as multicultural as America's biggest metropolis - half German; half Chinese. His CV reads like a must-go list for travelling foodies - Spice Market in New York, the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Hong Kong and The Private Kitchen in Sydney. Working with head chef **Angie Ford**, the makings of the menu can be glimpsed immediately in the open kitchen. American and Western cuts of meat such as Scotch steaks, tenderloins and pork chops are laid over binchotan white charcoal, the preferred cooking fuel of yakitori chefs in Japan. Roasted bone marrow with mushrooms and parsley on the starter list was a strong temptation. But final choices fell on the seared sashimi of hiramasa kingfish and the trio of Sydney rock oysters spiked with seasonal herb/spicy/tangy toppings. Wong's one-foot-in-each-culture approach featured strongly in other appetisers such as the buttermilk-marinated calamari with ginger chilli sauce and grilled peach and hand-pulled straciatella with pecan nut and rocket pesto. Meat hogs centre stage for the mains, as you would expect. Heading the fleshfest is Ranger's Valley black market bone-in ribeye - 1.2 kilos of meat grain-fed for 270 days - for \$158. For those who don't want to eat as a couple, Ranger's Valley is also the source of a 350g black angus beef scotch steak and a 200g NY sirloin. Not in the mood for bloody juices? Top alternatives include the bourbon-brined Kurobata pork chop with smoked apple and fig chutney or seared spatchcock with finger lime and mango salsa with parsley miso puree. The super-sized NY style cheesecake was wolfed down by a couple



nearby armed with two spoons. We opted for the same "twofer" deal with the burnt fig bread pudding and mocha ice cream. There's a good selection of sakes, including Junmai Tatewaki and Tkubetsu Junmai. The wine list is suitably international from the chardonnay and pinot noir only selections to single varietal and blended reds. Eastside Grill, The Old Rum Store, Level 1, 2-10 Kensington St, Chippendale; phone (02) 9212 0900.

Apartment blocks are springing up like proverbial mushrooms all over Sydney. Rather than erect block after block, smart developers like the Anka Property Group are building communities. The Union Place precinct in Rozelle sports a mini gourmet food hub to service the 200 or so plush apartments above, home to well-heeled downsizers, couples and families. But keen diners are coming from the surrounding catchment suburbs to dine at **The Provincial**, a slick slice of CBD dining operated by **Johan Khoury** and the **Hawach** family of **Jean Louis Joseph**, the renowned providore at Birkenhead Point.

If you arrived here wearing a blindfold and opened your eyes, it would be hard to get your bearings. The luxury-cum-Hamptons fit-out by Zanazan Architecture Studio blends exposed brushbox and black butt timbers, polished concrete floors, high ceilings and a heritage window from the CBA bank building in Martin Place to deliver stealth wealth at its finest. In the kitchen, gun chef **Patrick Dang** (ex Concrete Blonde) oversees the \$22,000 Spanish charcoal parilla grill to great effect, especially on a humid Sydney summer night. You must try the oysters, said Jean Paul Hawach, in a voice that brooked no argument and we gave in immediately. A smiling waitress quickly delivered a plate of Sydney rock oysters topped with passionfruit and ginger jelly, pickled fennel and yarra salmon roe as we studied the well-balanced wine list. We took JP's advice again when he recommended Vina Aquitania Sol de Sol pinot noir, a benchmark, cool-climate wine from Chile. The restaurant was full but the tables are so well-spaced that you never feel as if you are eavesdropping on anyone else's problems or passion. Following the moreish oysters and another entree of scallops with

sunchoke puree, watermelon, radish chicken crackling and hazelnut vinaigrette, it was time to make up our own minds. Our eyes wandered over the edited line-up from the woodfire grill, including roasted spatchcock with romaine lettuce, peas and bacon and New England lamb short loin with lentil de puy, tomato salad, white bean hummus and mustard jus. But the pan roasted ocean trout with walnut gremolata, clams, mussels and beurre blanc and semolina pasta with peas, zucchini flowers, cherry tomato and pecorino received the deciding nods. The Provincial provides some top value set menus for groups and a cocktail bar dishes up peach bellinis, boulevardiers and more. To finish we looked for crisp, clean-tasting desserts and came up trumps with the marinated strawberries and "cheesecake" which turned out to be an artful arrangement of the ingredients normally associated with the dessert. A great addition to the Inner West dining scene and it was only a 10 minute drive home. The Provincial, 124 Terry St, Rozelle; phone (02) 9818 4411.

The **Frisco Hotel** at Woolloomooloo, the seafarers haunt of choice for 150 years, has re-opened after a three-month makeover. A short stroll from Sydney's Fleet Base, its maritime history has been authentically preserved by Alexander & Co, the leading specialists in heritage renovations. The bikies who dropped by for beers after a night out in Kings Cross would probably feel out of place these days amid the seascape murals and chic blue and white decor that, thankfully, stops short of eradicating the historic hotel's nostalgic feel. The reno is a labour of love for licensee **Adam Micola** after spending a decade working in real estate. A great place for an after-work drink or meeting friends for seafood-based share plates such as lobster brioche rolls, tempura fish tacos and grilled miso salmon. Award-winning consultant **Gabrielle Webster** has curated a top wine list and the evocatively-named cocktails such as Sailor's Mistress and Smoking Guns seal the atmospheric deal. The Frisco Hotel, 46 Dowling St, Woolloomooloo; phone (02) 9357 1800. 🍷

*Top Left:* Delicious food from The Provincial restaurant. *Top right:* Interior of Eastside Grill restaurant.