

DINING with LISA MUXWORTHY

Feast for the eyes and the mouth

Manly Pavilion

Where: West Esplanade, Manly

Prices: Entrees from \$22; mains from \$34; desserts \$14.

Open: Seven days, from lunch 'til late

Bookings: 9949 9011

RESTAURATEUR David Gray, being true to his Italian heritage, would have you believe you are dining on the Amalfi Coast when at his newly-opened Manly Pavilion restaurant.

The 77-year-old building, renovated beautifully by architects Squillace Nicholas, is perched high on the West Esplanade to capitalise on views of the stunning shoreline. And Gray is right, we could well have been in Italy the day my friends and I decided to take a long lunch at this highly-anticipated venue.

The menu, created by chef Jonathan Barthelmess, was also largely Italian. Barthelmess trained with Steve Manfredi and

Janni Kyritsis, the recognised masters of Mediterranean cooking in Australia.

The \$88, fixed-price, five-course menu is recommended and, as it takes the pressure off choosing from all those dishes, we sit back and let the kitchen staff do all the hard work.

We start with some small antipasti-style dishes, like the tasty white anchovies, crumbed and fried and served with tomato aioli. The buffalo mozzarella, drizzled in olive oil and grilled on a lemon leaf, is so simple that it is truly amazing. The shaved cuttlefish and fennel, marinated in roast chilli oil, lemon juice and herbs and topped with crispy eggplant chips, was also a hit.

And the thinly-sliced raw veal with cured egg and parmesan was delicious. The salty dish, spread on top of some crispy bread was particularly morish.

For mains we had the pappardelle, mixed with a caramelised wild boar ragu, and the grilled snapper fillet with capers and braised capsicum.



Restaurateur David Gray. Inset: The veal with cured egg and parmesan, and the white anchovies.

We finished off with some petits fours. Dessert lovers will be in their element.

There has been plenty of talk about this restaurant and all the hype is well deserved - this place

is fantastic. Something of this calibre is long overdue on the northern beaches, and it's nice and close for us on the lower North Shore.

The food is sensational, with a

wine list to match, the wait staff are friendly and Gray, on the ground with his team to greet the diners, is charming.

This is fine dining, with a nice touch of heart. Oh, and don't forget that view!