

LANDING RIGHTS

The Landing is the latest addition to the Honeysuckle strip. The space is divided into a bar, the dining room and a sizeable outdoor area. It's a collaboration between Andrew and Lisa Margan, of Margan Wines, and Julianne and Ty Burford, of the Burwood Inn at Merewether. The dining room is in the capable hands of Heather Moore, formerly of Bacchus.

It has a classy, funky, alfresco vibe with big glass french doors to let in the balmy evening air. The indoor-outdoor approach will work perfectly for the approaching summer. There is great music playing – blues, '50s, '60s – letting you know that this is a place for grown-ups to kick back and unwind. Tables are perfectly spaced to prevent the feeling you are eavesdropping on the diners next to you.

The succinct menu is designed to be shared, and the indulgent offerings are sophisticated and imaginative. We start with a freshly shucked oyster with lemongrass granita – the cold lemony sweetness swirls around the salty oyster bite. My juices were flowing.

An artistic plate of caramelised scallops and crab tortellini arrives with a basil and ginger bisque. The pasta encapsulates crab that is bouncy and oh, so sweet, the scallops seared and soft. It's a showcase of seaside delights; elegant, delicate and pretty.

Slices of kingfish ceviche are adorned with chunky pieces of prawn and a zesty gazpacho. The seafood is overwhelmingly fresh and each element of the dish is a standout; it doesn't turn into one homogenised taste.

A plate of three perky pork belly pieces with tender sauteed squid and cauliflower is presented and you can almost hear the



ATMOSPHERE: The Landing is a place where grown-ups can unwind. **PICTURE:** PETER STOOP

crackling sizzling. The plate is devoid of greenery, which is where our side of buttered broccolini comes in. The crunchy florets, the gelatinous fat from the pork and the sweet sherry are a heady delight of textures and flavours.

There's no point licking fingers clean as slightly charred spatchcock wings, laden with cumin, chilli and lime need immediate attention. The mix of Moroccan flavours is complemented by tangy yoghurt and red peppers and the meat is succulent.

There is more in the savoury part of the menu that looks delicious, but dessert is too exciting. I am immediately drawn to the doughnuts with rhubarb and chantilly. Word is that doughnuts will take over where macarons and cupcakes have held reign, and rightly so. The yeasty goodness of a warm doughnut covered in sugar and cinnamon is hard to resist. Here you'll receive a mound of seven round, fluffy balls that melt in your mouth. The rhubarb (with its subtle hint of rosemary) adds a tartness that tones down the sugar.

For those who prefer a little less sweetness after dinner, The Landing Margarita may be the option. It is a deconstructed cocktail that has become food. Tequila jelly is served with

QUICK BITE

QUICK BITE

What: The Landing

Where: 1 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle

Prices: Plates are designed to be shared. Smaller sized plates \$18-\$24, main-sized plates \$34-\$38, sides \$8, desserts \$14

Chef: Michael Robinson

Wines: Fully licensed, a wide selection. Glasses \$7-\$12, bottles \$25-\$110

Hours: The dining area is open for lunch Wednesday to Sunday, noon to 3pm, and dinner Wednesday to Saturday, 6pm to late

Vegetarian: One entree, all sides, cheese plate

Bookings: 4927 1722

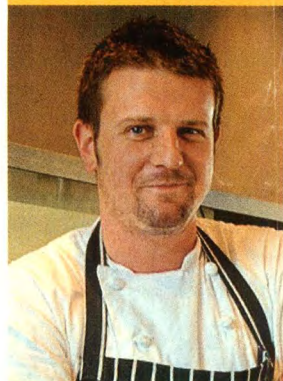
Bottom line: Entrees, mains and dessert for two, \$120, excluding drinks

an icy lime granita, apple and pink salt. Don't attempt it if you don't like the real thing and be sure to include this in your alcohol limit.

It's pretty easy to love The Landing. It has a great atmosphere, faultless service and delicious food.

TABLE TALK

MICHAEL ROBINSON, THE LANDING



Your signature or favourite dish?

The one-kilogram Cape Grimm rib eye we have on the menu. My all-time favourite dish was a fricassee of veal tongue, caramelised scallops and sweetbreads, with a smoked garlic soubise. The menu at The Landing is more approachable. My aim is to have a bit more fun with our food, which I think suits the casual harbourside vibe.

Where do you like to eat out?

I have just moved to Newcastle, so haven't had a huge amount of time yet to experience the restaurant scene. I have been to Bacchus, which was great. Tim Montgomery is a mate – we worked together at The Bathers Pavillion – and I love Tim's style of food. When I was in Sydney I enjoyed Duke Bistro at Darlinghurst (Flinders Hotel).

What's on the menu at home?

I try to keep it simple. Things like a slow-roasted pork belly with a fennel and crab salad. Or pasta with broccolini, chilli, lemon and anchovies. There's always room for a barbecue.

Michael Robinson is the head chef at The Landing Bar & Kitchen, Honeysuckle.