

with Karlie Rutherford



DINING

Laura Dundovic having dinner at Ramsgate RSL.



SPOTTED

Authors Judy Nunn and Bruce Venables at The Courthouse.



DINING

Politico's John Barilaro, Graham Richardson and Dominic Perrottet at Felix.



Mimi's bar manager Rhys Budd serves a margarita at the Coogee venue, which is launching a magnum of the cocktail. Picture: Rohan Kelly

SOME MAGIC IN THE MIX

MARGARITA MANIA CONTINUES WITH NEW VARIATIONS EMERGING

Sydney's obsession with the margarita shows no signs of stopping, with everything from a beer and margarita mix to a \$1250 magnum popping up at venues across the city.

With Thursday, February 22 being World Margarita Day, venues have gone to new levels to celebrate the cocktail, which had a massive resurgence during the pandemic.

Celebrity hot spot Mimi's, which gave Instagram its caviar bumps and had Kourtney Kardashian visit recently, is launching a 1.752 litre margarita magnum.

In an Australian first, the Merivale venue's cocktail serves 10-12.

The cocktail was developed by the 2023 Bartender of the Year James Irvine (who is also the group's creative cocktail lead) and comes with a choice of salts, from citrus to chilli, so guests can garnish it as they see fit.

In partnership with luxe tequila brand Don Julio 1942, which retails for \$250 a bottle, the magnum costs \$1250 and will sit chilled over ice,



Shauna Lyall at curly Lewis

tableside. "The Margarita is the world's most ordered cocktail ... it's the versatility of the Margarita that makes it so appealing to the masses," says Irvine.

"Whether you're a purist with a Classic or a Tommy's Margarita or adventurous with iterations of spice, savoury or more contemporary styles

of Margarita, you're contributing to the Margarita's global acclaim."

"The ritual of the Mimi's magnum margarita is to celebrate one of our favourite cocktails in style!"

On the other end of the spectrum, Bondi beach brewery curly Lewis has launched a half margarita, half beer "Largerita". The El Tequileno Largerita is available on tap and combines their curly Lewis El Gringo Cerveza with a Tommy's Margarita (tequila, agave syrup and lime juice.) The creation came about because the drinks are the two most requested at the seaside brewery and restaurant.

"Mexican-style lagers are having a moment, and the Tommy's Margarita has become a fan-favourite across bars across the country. Our El Tequileno Largerita is the love child of the two and the ultimate beer for the lively Bondi crowd," says curly Lewis co-founder Oliver dos Remedios.

Redfern's Ricos Tacos are putting on a masterclass with Cazcabel Tequila for \$50 per person.

THE MOUTH The diner they all fear



Aw shucks, Balmain still alive and well

Ah, Balmain, the suburb that Sydney loves to hate. Sure, it's unfair, but an old waterfront wharfies suburb turned lefty millionaires' row was always going to attract some unkind attention in a city as obsessed with politics as it is with property.

It's even been blamed for the housing crisis, as if bulldozing a bunch of sandstone homes to create Zetland-by-Sea would fix the problem.

One commentator recently even said the place was dull, boring and "not equitable", which presumably means not enough vape shops and kebab joints for some people's liking.

To test this proposition – is Balmain dead? – The Mouth recently Uber'd over to the insular peninsula to check out the new Dry Dock, which is quickly becoming a new hot ticket in town after a recent renovation.

Well, on a recent Friday night, every pub we passed seemed to be doing a good trade. Meanwhile, the newly refurbished Dry Dock was pumping. Rocking up for a table unannounced led to an hour or so wait, easily managed with several negronis in the buzzy front bar.

Eventually our able hostess – who should get an AO for services to managing hungry idiots like us who didn't plan ahead – brought us to the far

end of the dining room, which is simple, white, eschewing all the crap on the walls so many restaurant groups obsess over.

And the food? Somewhere deep in the bowels of the kitchen a lonely man is precisely mincing eschalots for a mignonette sauce entirely superfluous to gorgeous, plump, shucked-to-order Merimbula oysters.

Our table also went in hard for salt cod croquettes and anchovy toasts, pepped up with a tangy garlic cream.

Mains, too, did not disappoint.

We had gone in all sceptical noting the number of recent openings where a corporate chef hides behind a Jospier grill.

Not here. Chef Ben Sitton turned out a cracking roast chicken with a sweet and savoury pan sauce, and a massive pork chop crumbed and deep fried and tender enough to eat with a fork.

In short, it was the kind of warming fun food we love to eat at home and generally do better and for less money than most restaurants. And the bill for two with a nice bottle of Kiwi chardonnay was relative value at a bit over \$300.

Calling it now, this is the best new opener we've been to in a while. Just make sure to book ahead.

The Mouth is an undercover critic and bon vivant who pays his own way around Sydney and beyond.

MY LOCAL Brad Cox

"For a bloke who loves a good yarn over Japanese-inspired brews and classic tunes, Bar Yuki's in Milton is the go-to. It's like Tokyo (if I had any idea what Tokyo was like) meets the South Coast without the long-haul flight." Country singer Brad Cox is about to embark on a new regional tour, 'Yarns And Yodels'.

