

■ goodtaste

POST **TIMEOUT**

# Tasty tapas served Freo-style

## madam

## lush

**JANE CORNES**

**Betty** Botox and I arrive at Freo's Gypsy Tapas House to find one of Perth's best chefs enjoying an early dinner with his family.

Except "enjoy" isn't quite the word for it.

He says the squid's tough and the bread stale. Oh dear, I think. What a great night we're in for. Not.

But here's the thing. The food's terrific and the ragged hunks of warm Turkish bread that accompany every dish is not in the slightest bit stale.

Which just goes to show.

As with so many places, the difference between a good meal and a bad one rests in the choices one makes.

Patrons sit inside in an eclectic dining space lined with bric-a-brac and artwork, or outside in a courtyard surrounded by other people's shop fronts.

The menu is made up of 30 savoury tapas dishes and five desserts, each priced at \$7.50.

Gluttons like Betty and I will probably need four dishes to feel properly full, but most people seem to find three apiece about right. Go with a group and you can do a set-price dego.

Because the dishes are fairly cheap and you're going to eat rather a lot of them, much of the angst that usually surrounds ordering seems not to apply at the Gypsy.

We flit through the menu, ordering anything that takes our fancy. Grilled prawns, a char-grilled salmon cutlet, chickpea and chorizo stew, pistachio quail, "Tito's favourite lentils", roasted pumpkin with za'atar, baked fetta. And we're still only up to seven!

The salmon is juicy and sweet, the chickpea stew a robust delight.

The lentils are moist, nicely rendered and full-flavoured, while the crescent of roasted pumpkin is a little undercooked but lifted by the za'atar.

Even better is the pistachio quail, with its salty, lemony char-grilled skin



■ Tapas takes the angst out of ordering from a menu of set-price delicious dishes. Above: Grilled Atlantic salmon.

Below: Baked fetta with tomatoes and olives. Pictures: Jane Cornes



and generous scattering of nuts.

Sharing line honours with the quail is a wedge of warm baked fetta, topped with a quality tomato sugo and a neat row of juicy wild olives.

This is so good I order a second serve all to myself while Betty has a sort of liqueur chocolate sponge roll that is undoubtedly own-made and okay if you like that kind of thing.

The wine list is a pleasant surprise. Recently revamped, it is way more cosmopolitan than I'm expecting. We drink a modestly-priced Spanish Verdejo, which they sell by the bottle or glass.

The staff is a lively, colourful bunch providing casual, no-frills service with winning smiles.

What a great little spot.

## at a GLANCE

### ■ The Gypsy Tapas House

Cnr High and Queen streets, Fremantle. Phone 9336 7135

### ■ opening times

Thu-Sat 11am-11pm

### ■ rating

food **★★★★★**

service **★★★★★**

ambience **★★★★★**

value for money **★★★★★**

### ■ style - Tapas

■ wine - surprisingly good

■ chef/owner - Stefan Armentano

■ feel - very Freo

■ wheelchair access - yes

■ cost - all dishes are \$7.50

■ all in all - casual as all get-out. The food is mostly well-cooked. Good value.