

Grab Your Fork

sydney eats * tasty travels * a feast of photos



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TUESDAY, JULY 27, 2010

Kopi Luwak at Olio, St Leonards, Sydney



grab your fork

Charcuterie plate \$13

Prosciutto, Spanish salami, bresaola, roasted olives, pickles and grilled sourdough

The smart Mediterranean brasserie, **Olio**, is the last thing you'd expect to find at The Forum, a jostle of takeaway stores, a supermarket and a non-stop thoroughfare of commuters. It's barely a dozen steps away from the humdrum of train travel, but Olio is an oasis of calm - a warm and comforting palette of caramels and chocolate browns. The dining room, expansive and softly lit, is bordered by banquette seating, an open kitchen and a twinkling beaded curtain.

GRAB YOUR FORK is Helen's gastronomic journey around Sydney and abroad. She writes a monthly Eat This! column for [Time Out Sydney](#) and is Cheap Eats editor for the [2012](#)

[Eating and Drinking Sydney](#) guide. Helen is a contributing writer for [The Foodies' Guide to Sydney](#) and a reviewer behind the [2012 Food Lovers Guide to Chinatown](#). Her work has been published in [Voracious: The Best New Australian Food Writing](#). Read more [about Helen](#) or send an [email](#).



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Olio

Recent media coverage of Olio has tended to focus on its new cafe menu item of **kopi luwak** -- the coffee beans extracted from civet droppings -- but tonight we're here for the full dining experience, with newly appointed head chef Damien Naughton (ex- La Grillade and Pond) at the helm.

We start with a **charcuterie plate**, nibbling on shaved prosciutto, Spanish salami and thin slices of bresaola air-dried beef. The meats are draped artistically on a rustic wooden paddle, and served alongside saucers of olive and pickles.

Thick wedges of sourdough have a smokiness from the grill-marks on their side, and are good enough to savour on their own.

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Special Eats



Crispy pork hock \$13.50
with seared scallops, fennel, rocket and ruby grapefruit

The menu is surprisingly varied and comprehensive but there's no way I can tear my gaze away from those three magical words "**crispy pork hock**". Three chunky slices of pork are generously fatty, the richness of the meat alleviated by the bitterness of radicchio and rocket leaves, thin shavings of fennel, and scattered segments of ruby grapefruit.

Three discs of scallop are a little lacklustre in flavour, but they are seared to a delicate caramelised crust, still plump and juicy inside.

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Useful References

- [Top 10 Sydney Eats for Tourists](#)
- [10 Tips on How to Market Your Restaurant](#)

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- EVERY SAT: [Eveleigh Farmers' Markets](#)
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Potato gnocchi house made \$19
with sauteed exotic mushrooms, spinach, grana padano cheese and truffle oil

It doesn't take much for me to convince [Hazchem](#) we should share a **potato gnocchi** for entree as well. The dish is beautifully presented, simple and clean, with a few shavings of grana padano cheese on top. The potato gnocchi are light and buttery pillows, almost like soft polenta in texture, although I find the use of truffle oil a little overwhelming, its harsh intensity determinedly pervading every mouthful.

PUBLISHED WORKS



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"Daube de beuf" - Slow cooked beef cheeks in red wine \$28 (Blackboard special) with mashed potato, broccolini and broad beans

We opt for **daube de beuf**, one of four blackboard specials for our mains. The stump of dark meat is livened by the graceful tumble of micro leaves. The meat is tender, slow-cooked so the tendons and sinew have become soft and gelatinous, and it's a welcome treat to see more vegetables than meat on a dish. The stalks of broccolini are bright green and full of crunch.



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Duck, orange and cognac sausages house made \$28 with puy lentils, cabbage and pancetta

House-made duck, orange and cognac sausages are the ideal comfort food for winter. I find the sausages a little grainy -- others might call it rustic -- but the flavours of orange and cognac really come through, lingering on the palate. Puy lentils are satisfyingly chewy, especially on the bed of creamy potato mash. A crown of pancetta is super crisp and I secretly take delight in the two onion rings on top.

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Roasted brussel sprouts with chestnuts \$8 (Blackboard special)

A side of **brussel sprouts** provides plenty of greens, pan-fried with pancetta and butter, although we wish there were a few more chestnuts pieces.



grab your fork

Vanilla creme brulee with biscotti \$12

We move onto **vanilla creme brulee** for dessert, a shallow terracotta pot with a rind of toffee we take great satisfaction in dismantling with our spoons. The custard is silky smooth, sweet and eggy, and generous enough without the accompanying shard of pistachio-studded biscotti. We do notice there are no tell-tale vanilla bean specks though.



Tiramisu with shaved chocolate \$11

Tiramisu is an alcoholic's delight, Savoiardi fingers boozed up and layered between rich but fluffy layers of mascarpone cream.



Coffee cupping spoon

Usually it's dessert that forms the highlight of my meal - everything else leading up to it is simply an obstacle. Tonight it's the post-dessert coffee I'm looking forward to most. Hazchem has come prepared - a self-confessed coffee nut and coffee judge, he doesn't go anywhere without his **coffee cupping spoon**, a deep-bowled spoon that helps tasters amplify the nuances of coffee brews.

His spoon even has its own protective pouch, sewn for him by his craft-clever sister, and whilst he doesn't end up using it this evening, I remain fascinated by its weight, shine and purpose.



Kopi luwak with petit fours \$9

It's true. Kopi luwak comes from Asian palm civet droppings. The cat-sized mammals, a native of Indonesia, eat ripe coffee berries, which pass through their digestive tract relatively unchanged in shape. What has changed, some say, is the action of the civet's digestive enzymes on the fleshy pulp of the coffee berry, changing the proteins, reducing its bitterness and partially germinating the bean through a malting process.

The beans are washed, dried and lightly roasted - its flavour is said to be smoother and less bitter.

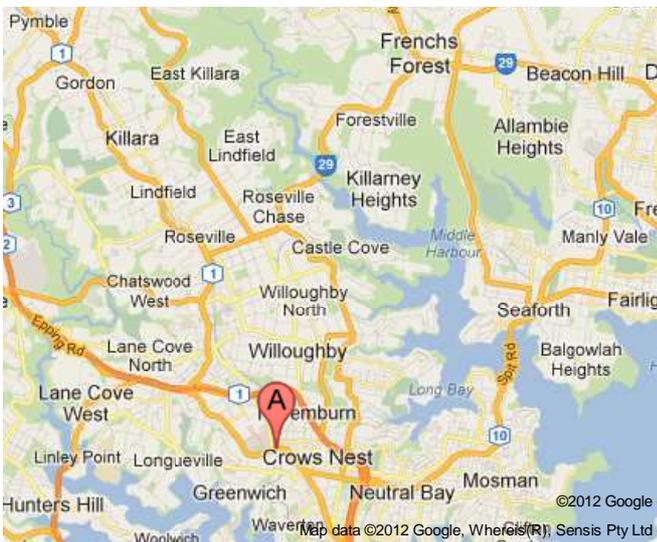
For nine dollars, there's an impressive sense of ceremony that comes with your espresso shot of kopi luwak, a slate grey rectangular tile offering caffeine worshippers a palate cleanser, petit four and brown sugar cube.

We're told to drink the ginger spritzer first. Hazchem and I defy instructions and cleanse with plain mineral water instead. The coffee has a notably rich flavour, unfolding itself across the tongue in demonstration of its balanced palate. There's a definite punch of flavour with only faint notes of bitterness. Hazchem thinks the beans may have been slightly over-roasted, detecting a smokiness to the brew which disguises its original characteristics.

We take a generous swig of the ginger spritzer and notice that the kopi luwak becomes sweeter as a result. Hazchem also tries the kopi luwak espresso with a dash of milk, and we find that the milk also brings out greater sweetness in the coffee.

The coffee, meanwhile, has been a runaway success for Olio. Initial estimates of 20-40 serves of kopi luwak per day have instead peaked at 100 coffees per day. What's that saying? Oh yes, one man's trash is another man's treasure.

Grab Your Fork and Hazchem dined as guests of Olio.



[View Larger Map](#)



Olio

Shop 1, The Forum
201-205 Pacific Highway
(the main piazza at St Leonards train station)
St Leonards, Sydney
Tel: +61 (02) 9439 8988

Opening hours:
Monday 7am - 4pm
Tuesday to Friday 7am - 9pm
Closed on weekends

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posted by Helen (Grab Your Fork) on [7/27/2010 01:40:00 AM](#) 

18 Comments:

At [7/27/2010 9:24 AM](#),  [YaYa](#) said...

Who knew such a gem existed on the North Shore and right at the station too, easy peasy for an early week night out!

At [7/27/2010 9:30 AM](#),  [john@heneedsfood](#) said...

Oooh me likey beef cheeks! Very nice spread of dishes you had there

At [7/27/2010 10:11 AM](#),  [billy@atablefortwo](#) said...

Them big fat sausages looks delish! Me like! All the dishes look very comforting actually.

At [7/27/2010 10:36 AM](#),  [Sara @ Belly Rumbles](#) said...

All the food looks so comforting. The sausages look impressive the way they are plated.

Now, that is a true coffee lover to have your own spoon, hehe.

At [7/27/2010 12:07 PM](#),  [lateraleating](#) said...

Great review. I've been curious about that coffee since I read the news in the SMH, I suppose it's worth giving it a try.

At [7/27/2010 12:52 PM](#),  [Hannah](#) said...

Next, I think you should eat the enormous bull testicles photographed on my recent blog post ;)

While I'll happily eat EVERYBODY'S brussels sprouts. Those things are like crack to me.

At [7/27/2010 1:17 PM](#),  [Margaret Tran](#) said...

I have no idea where to start with this post. Those sausages and that crispy pork hock + scallops ♥

Mmmm coffee..

At [7/27/2010 2:11 PM](#),  [Ellie \(Almost Bourdain\)](#) said...

Keep hearing good review about this place. Must get there soon to try out the \$9 poki luwak!~

At [7/27/2010 3:45 PM](#),  [hazchem](#) said...

thanks again for the invite Helen, it was a good fun night & great to catch up. Food was definitely tasty and I guess Kopi Luwak is an experience that can be ticked off many people's lists. If any of your readers wants to filter out the ranting from my coffee tweets, you can find me as @hazchem on Twitter.

At [7/27/2010 5:16 PM](#), [bbsnoopy](#) said...

Food looks very very YUM but it's the coffee which has me interested. Must try one day :P

At [7/27/2010 7:01 PM](#), [Simon Food Favourites](#) said...

looks very reasonably priced — especially the Crispy pork hock with scallops for only \$13.50 :-)

At [7/27/2010 10:01 PM](#), [reality Raver](#) said...

Gee I have heard of people taking their own pool cue to pubs, but coffee tasting spoons now that is a first.

At [7/28/2010 12:40 AM](#), [Arwen from Hoglet K](#) said...

The combination of soft mash and chewy lentils sounds great, and the onion rings are a cute touch. The kopi luwak sounds overpriced, but nice to try - and it's definitely cool to have a special tasting spoon!

At [7/28/2010 8:08 AM](#), [Gourmet Chick](#) said...

It's funny how the media can hype one aspect of a restaurant when there is actually a lot more to it - that's why blogs are important to keep the balance!

By the way I have started posting large photos using the flickr technique you suggested Helen and really enjoying the results - it certainly makes a difference!

At [7/28/2010 9:44 AM](#), [Lisa \(bakebikeblog\)](#) said...

What a delightful array of dishes....and that tiramasu - YUM!

At [7/28/2010 10:20 PM](#), [Adrian @ Food Rehab](#) said...

gosh, there's something about pork and seared scallops combined in one dish that makes me go incredibly insane (in a good way) that is ha!

At [8/03/2010 4:47 PM](#), [Helen \(Grab Your Fork\)](#) said...

Hi YaYa - I know. Olio is so well-hidden that I wonder if even the locals know it's there!

Hi John - Me likey beef cheeks too! Slow cooked meats are always good :)

Hi Billy - Heh, you and John must have taken the same likey pills! It was perfect weather for comfort food.

Hi Sara - I always struggle to plate sausages prettily without them looking phallic. Obviously the secret is height. And onion rings :)

Hi lateraleating - I've been dying to try kopi luwak too. It's surprisingly affordable and I like the way they serve it with petit fours too.

Hi Hannah - Haha, as you know, I will give anything a go! And brussel sprouts are amazing aren't they? It's such a shame that they've been overcooked in the past and people are still coming to terms with the trauma!

Hi Margaret - Oh the crispy pork hock is a very good place to start :) I almost wish I could have finished on that as well!

Hi Ellie - It's a cosy spot and oh so convenient, especially for commuters! The kopi luwak is recommended, even if just to try it once.

Hi Hazchem - The pleasure was all mine. A catch-up was long overdue. I've updated the post with a link to your Twitter handle.

At [8/03/2010 4:56 PM](#), [Helen \(Grab Your Fork\)](#) said...

Hi bbsnoopy - Definitely recommend you give the kopi luwak a try, and for \$9 it's a very affordable afternoon adventure!

Hi Simon Food Favourites - The pork hock entree is quite cheap given the ingredients. I could have quite happily eaten this for a main - at double the size of course!

Hi Reality Raver - Ha, I was endlessly fascinated by it. I've often wanted to have my own little box for salt flakes, because hey, sometimes it pays to be prepared :)

Hi Arwen - I thought the kopi luwak was quite cheap given that the beans normally sell for \$300/kg. And lentils and mash are always a textural treat.

Hi Gourmet Chick - An interesting observation. I do find that blogs tend to offer a very different perspective and/or focus which is probably why they're so widely read.

Your new larger photos look awesome :)

Hi Lisa - I'm quite particular about tiramisu but this one was great. And yes, a wide variety of dishes to try always makes me happy!

Hi Adrian - Haha, you and me both! Seared scallops and crispy pork are a way better match than peas and carrots :)

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