



ONE GOOD REASON

Ruby L'Otel, 68 Victoria Rd, Roselle

Indoors, outdoors; old school, hip; Pimms cocktails and quality beer on tap – this recently renovated gem caters for every kind of patron. It certainly gives new meaning to painting the town red. Call (02) 9555 1900.

Having trouble cleaning out your char-grill pan? Coat the base with salt, heat until it's crusty, then scrape out using a wooden spoon.

For more handy kitchen tips, visit www.taste.com.au.



GLUTTON

Monkey Magic, 3 & 4, 410 Crown St, Surry Hills. Call (02) 9358 4444 or visit www.monkeymagic.com.au.

Swinging by Monkey Magic in the heart of Surry Hills is a cracking way to wrap up a workday. This relatively recent addition to Crown Street combines exciting cuisine with a casual, relaxed atmosphere, complete with gleaming lacquered communal benches and intimate tables for two, plus friendly service without the wait. That's three big ticks in my book. Head chef Hidetoshi Tsuboi was aiming for traditional oriental flavours with a modern Western edge when the venue opened earlier this year and he's hit the nail on the head. Tonight, the girls and I pore over the extensive wine list and menu, having trouble deciding between the too-pretty-to-eat nigiri sushi tray (\$18 for the small), the Peking duck pancakes special (\$15 each) in all their hoi sin sauciness and the caramelised pork lettuce cups (\$17 for four), so we order the lot and, quite frankly, we're pleased we did. It's as if we've assembled our own degustation. We carry on with generous servings of soft shell crab roll (\$15), tempura prawn roll (\$14) and the gloriously sticky teriyaki chicken (\$17) served with lotus crisps – not to mention the obligatory but thoroughly pleasing warm salted edamame (\$6). It's a showcase of flavoursome treats that somehow all work together and I'm sure it's more to do with Tsuboi than our selection. Before we know it, it's far too late to still be out on a school night. In a flash, the table is cleared, we bid each other farewell and I jump in the car, completely cleansed of the deadline stressed day without a single plate to wash – just like magic. **CLAIRE BRADLEY**



CAMPBELL MATTINSON

WINE FRONT

The Foster's Group recently gathered some keen New Zealand sauvignon blanc drinkers and asked them to taste test a range of whites – a selection of sauvignon blancs and chardonnays. They didn't tell the tasters this, though they were given no clues as to what the wines might be.

Testers wanted to know why some drinkers are turning away from chardonnay towards sauvignon blanc because of chardy's flak or because of its image problem.

The result? Seventy per cent of the participants thought chardonnays were anything but chardonnay, and 65 per cent didn't pick the best-selling New Zealand sauvignon blanc as sauvignon blanc.

So, sure, lap up the Kiwi sauv blanc – Montana Sauvignon Blanc 2009 is a goodie – but don't give chardonnay another go. **Ninth Island Chardonnay 2009** (\$24, from www.winelistaustralia.com.au) is a top pick to reignite the love affair. It's fresh, crisp and 100 per cent delicious.

Campbell Mattinson's *The Best of Red Wine Book 2009/10* (Hardcover, \$24.95) is out now.

THREE OF A KIND... COOKBOOKS



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1. **Jamie's America** (Michael Joseph, \$65). Another year, another Jamie Oliver odyssey. This time round, he's tackling the good ol' US of A, which has a less than favourable reputation when it comes to food. Still, the cheeky Brit proves there's room for big burgers alongside exotic jambalaya, gumbo and a raft of new inspiration.

2. **Street Food** (Lantern, \$100). 'Hefty' is a good word to describe David Thompson's over-the-top glamorising the culinary delights of Thailand. Drool over the extravagant pictures by Peter Carter, while learning simple recipes for the cuisine most Aussies just can't get enough of.

3. **She's Leaving Home** (Lantern, \$49.95). Harking back to when recipes were handed down through the generations, this cute-as-a-button book passes from mother to daughter with TV favourite Monica Trapaga put together this combination of family history, chef's secrets and tips and tricks after her daughter, Lil, announced she was flying the coop. Aw, thanks, Mum!