

DINING OUT



IRONBARK BREWERY DOUGLAS SUTHERLAND-BRUCE

Reading the Chef-Adventurer's column with enjoyment, as I always do, I was entertained by the changes he's seen since 1990. We arrived sixteen years before that, sometime during the Cretaceous Period and believe me - the changes in the dining scene since then!

One of the more agreeable developments since 1974 has been the genesis of micro breweries - away from the vast monolith of Swan Breweries (in those heady days offering either Swan Lager or Emu Bitter).

The next logical step from boutique breweries was for those establishments to offer firstly food and then entertainments, coming almost a full circle in time to the British pubs of the late 1700s - when the publican offered local, home-brewed ale and beer and good, wholesome, plain food.

These public houses were a social focus for the locals and served as a combination town hall, restaurant, drinking venue and social club - exactly the uses we now see on any Sunday's drive up the Swan Valley.

Of the several options available to us, as a family, decended un-announced and un-reserved onto the Ironbark Brewery.

Far from treating our plea for a table with the scorn it deserved (this was Sunday and the place was bulging at the seams) the wait staff were exceptionally polite and within minutes we found ourselves seated with a menu and a cool amber beverage within easy reach.

Incidentally, while I am not knowledgeable about beer, I do know what I like (and how dumb do you have to be not to know?) and I can thoroughly recommend the Ironbark Pilsener

style beer - light, flavoursome and delicious. Chief Brewer Graeme White certainly knows his hops.

(Ironbark offer a tasting tray of five sample beers for \$10 - a delectable option for decision making).

But excellent as the beer was, we were there for the food and the Friday to Sunday menu offers a small, but serviceable, selection of plain hearty and affordable tucker.

On Wednesdays and Thursdays diners have to content themselves only with wonderful pizza cooked in a wood-fired oven (\$18.50 for large and \$13 for small). I know they were wonderful because I saw several zipping past our table leaving a mouth-watering redolence in the air behind them.

The Friday to Sunday menu is described by Ironbark as 'simple', but it's really pretty sophisticated - Angela's selection of a Smoked Chicken Breast salad (\$18.50) was worthy of any restaurant anywhere - the smoking process retains all moistness within the chicken breasts while imparting a delicate flavour emphasised by a crisp fresh garden salad served with sweet-smelling Balsamic vinegar.

In case you've ever wondered - that's why it's called 'Balsamic' vinegar - it smells like flowering Balsam.



Young Kat ordered a 'Warm garlic Prawn salad' (\$19.50 - see picture). Which had just about the most tender, perfectly cooked prawns I have ever stolen off another diner's plate.

James and I took the Ironbark challenge - 'It's huge, Jimmy!' - and had a couple of 'The Big Mallee Bull' (\$25 - see photo). This gargantuan burger has a truly beautifully cooked sirloin

steak, beetroot, fried egg, cheese, caramelised onions between three (3) slices of toasted home-made bread.

This as well as a nice salad and home-made sweet potato chips. Fortunately I am extremely greedy where good food is concerned or I may



not have been able to eat every shred as I did.

The menu also offers lighter, smaller and cheaper dishes from snacks such as Wedges with Sour Cream and Chili Sauce (\$11) through light meals (Shearer's Grilled Chicken Baguette - \$12 - with avocado, tomato, mayonnaise, cranberry sauce, rocket lettuce and a side of Wedges) to more substantial dishes such as we ate.

On Saturdays and Sundays the Ironbark provide live music and the combination of good food, leisurely consumed - the sound of people having a good time, pleasant music, polite, efficient but relaxed service at shaded tables in the warm sunshine made me very glad to have come to Perth all those years ago.

Very highly recommended.



Smith's Mill

RESTAURANT

*Newly opened and renovated
with an exciting new menu*

Owned and operated by
Wendy and Mel Simpson who are both
highly awarded local chefs and residents.

Try us for that special occasion
or casual dining, including
Mid Week Specials @ \$20.00.

Relaxed Sunday Brunch,
fully licensed or BYO wine only.

Dinner - Wednesday to Saturday. Sunday
Brunch 9am - 3pm. Coffee cakes available.

Dogs welcome on the Verandah

3 -5 Railway Pde, Glen Forrest
(08) 9298 8011




*We're as Aussie
as Banjo Patterson*

Come in and try our
Multi-award winning beers

Live Music: Saturdays - 1:00 til 4:00, Sundays - 2:00 til 5:00

Opening Hours
Wood Fired Pizza
Wed to Thurs ~ 10:30 to 5:30
Restaurant Meals
Fri & Sat ~ 10:30 to closing
Sundays ~ 10:30 to 6

The Valencia Complex
55 Benara Rd, Caversham

9377 4400
www.ironbarkbrewery.com.au