




Review

by Terry Durack



 15/20

Hatch

Address: Humphrey's Hotel, One Hurstville Plaza, 288 Forest Road, Hurstville, 02 9807 7333, humphreysotel.com.au

Open: Lunch Fri-Sun from noon; dinner Wed-Sun from 5.30pm

Vibe: Vegas-style dining that's more clubby than pubby

Go-to dish: Dry-aged Murray cod bouillabaisse, \$44

Drinks: 12 beers on tap, signature cocktails and 250 wines with an impressive cellar list

Cost: About \$220 for two, plus drinks



Fine dining heads south

The caviar cornetto has hit Hurstville. The tiny waffle cone is filled with tangy cream and topped with finely snipped chives and Oscietra caviar; a lush but momentary mouthful. It costs \$30 a pop, and it's going off. In a pub.

At Hatch restaurant in the new Humphrey's Hotel, the buzzy crowd went through 90 cornettos last weekend alone. That's before they ordered the \$250 Jack's Creek tomahawk steak, carved at the table, and the \$300 rock lobster with XO butter.

Hurstville has never been short of delicious food, from the classic Hong Kong comfort cooking at Sun Ming, to roast goose at Taste of Shunde and the dim sum at Golden Sands. But Hatch appears to have come from the future, as part of a response, no doubt, to the serious money being spent on Hurstville's

local infrastructure and residential towers.

Enter Mitchell Waugh's ambitious Public House Management Group, which already has Paddington's The Royal Hotel and Glebe's The Toxteth on its books. With general manager

Adrian Basha moving across from Merivale, the group is creating a radically different blueprint for the good old Sydney pub.

It's a bit confusing, so just to be clear: Humphrey's Hotel is on the first floor of a high-rise. A 220-seat all-weather terrace and sports bar (think fancy pub fare) wraps itself around Hatch, a flash 100-seat restaurant with more than a hint of Vegas. Melissa Collison Design hasn't held back, building in a central marble bar, heroing the open kitchen, installing stage lighting, and mixing tables large and small, round and square, with roomy circular

booths. Mosaic tiling and snowball chandeliers compete for attention, and the loos are pure showbiz.

To go with the statement decor is a suitably statement menu by executive chef, 32-year-old Scott Greve, formerly head chef of 6HEAD in The Rocks. He's brought a few things with him – bits of the menu read word-for-word – but an elevated steakhouse offering makes sense.

Greve has also worked as a butcher, so you're in safe hands with the big-budget, dry-aged specials. I'm happy with a Portoro MB4+ grain-fed 300g Angus rib-eye (\$80), which comes grill-marked and crusty, the interior blush-pink. Four sauces are offered, but don't miss, as I did, the fine print (\$6 each). A bowl of excellent triple-cooked chips (very Heston Blumenthal) is also extra (\$11). Sommelier Theo Nguyen suggests a blackberry-and-spice 2018 Prunotto Barbera d'Alba, for a solid-but-plausible \$92.

Yes, of course I had a caviar cornetto (when in Hurstville, etc)

octopus chunks and just-cooked pipis and mussels. Dry-ageing renders the skin as crisp as a potato chip, while the snow-white flesh is juicy and long-flavoured.

Hatch is full of surprises, from the charcoal-black focaccia, to a fancy trompe l'oeil dessert styled as a Faberge egg (\$18). Titled "Hatched", it's a cleverly contrived concoction of white chocolate shell filled with white chocolate ice-cream and mango and passionfruit yolk; very satisfying to smash with your spoon.

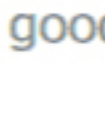





What's excellent about Hatch is the democratic mix of both inside and outside, plain and fancy, beef burger and venison tartare. The loud crowd is in everything from shorts and hoodies to wow frocks and jackets, and nobody bats an eyelid if you're tucking into a bowl of chips or a caviar cornetto. Yes, there's a good, meaty wine list and big-night-out cocktails for those who drink, but there are also interesting teas and juices for those who don't.

This is contemporary Australia going out for dinner. In a pub.

The first-floor new pub dining room at Humphrey's Hotel is a big clubby; offerings include (from top) dry-aged Murray cod bouillabaisse, pig's head fritti, "Hatched" white chocolate egg dessert; and (inset) caviar cornetto. Photos: James Brickwood, Wolter Peeters

and it was terrific. And pig's head fritti (\$25), for which the head is braised for 12 hours, the meat picked off, layered with black pudding, crumbed and deep-fried. Gussied up with a herb and fennel salad, apple jam, porky jus and hollandaise, it's the complete opposite to a two-bite cornetto.

Bouillabaisse (\$44) stars Murray cod in an emulsified sauce glowing with saffron, along with tender

HOW WE SCORE Of 20 points, 10 are awarded for food, 5 for hospitality, 3 for the setting and experience, and 2 for value. **12** Fair **13** Satisfactory **14** Good **15**  Very good **16**  Seriously good **17**  Great **18**  Excellent **19**  Outstanding **20**  As good as it gets



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