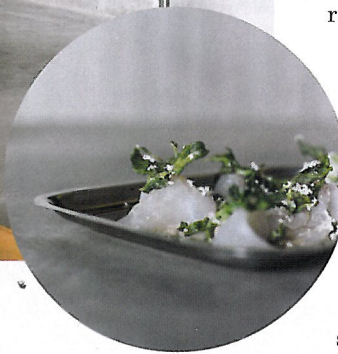


Weekends



THIS IMAGE: Franklin's sleek interior. Tassie scallops (inset). BELOW: A modern yet earthy feel. BOTTOM: The Art Deco entrance.



REVIEWS

# Tasmanian top notes

**EDWINA DICK** visits Hobart's acclaimed new(ish) restaurant where Tasmania tastes as good as it looks.

Putting a native fur, my dining companion Alice asks: "Oh, can I sit on a possum please, I'm a bit chilly?"

"Of course... actually, it's a hybrid of possum and wallaby," answers a waiter with a wink as we take our seats. I don't hide my grimace well. Alice was raised on a farm though; she's not irked in the slightest.

Wallaby pelts (resplendent with full tails) won't appeal to everyone. There's no doubt, though, set against the swanky simplicity of polished concrete and simple '50s-style furniture, the feel is unapologetically Tasmanian. Such is the glorious enigma of Hobart dining sensation, Franklin.

Here, head chef David Moyle, (previously of Byron's The Pacific Dining Room and Franklin's predecessor, The Stackings) is revered for his bold edit of exquisite local produce, prepared with reverence. Seasoned with flavours of the wild, think toasted saltbush, dried oyster and wakame butter, these elements come together for sublime eating at Franklin.

"There's no Tassie sparkling!" laments Alice, scrutinising the French-heavy wine list. Franklin only stocks natural wines and just two Tasmanian numbers make the cut. We settle on a glass of Gringet (a ginger-based dry sparkling wine) and start selecting our feast.

"This is really special," says Alice, pointing to the listing of whole wood-roasted abalone.

"Some people might balk at \$72, but you never, ever see abalone on a Tasmanian restaurant menu... it's normally exported to Asia immediately." We won't order it today, but we spy our neighbours' delight with theirs.

Ten out of the 14 Franklin dishes star seafood, but we're not talking your regular 'name an Aussie fish dish' picks. The selection and preparation is far more rarefied: steamed periwinkles; grains cooked with braised nettles and southern calamari; raw sea urchin in nasturtium leaves.

The flawless brine of the Southern Ocean renders the delicate urchins remarkable. Wrapped in the leaf of my Nanna's favourite flower, today they come topped with an ounce of softly cooked onion. I'm incredulous that a serve of two is just \$8.

We go on. A plate of raw kingfish with salted daikon and fresh horseradish is Van Diemen's Land sashimi. Japanese in inspiration, Tasmanian to the core. Then we share a soup so extraordinary I'll bore others about it for years: dried scallop broth with raw scallops, creamed celeriac and anise. Dressed with a scattering of garlic flower buds, it's celestial to the eye, and umami gold to the mouth.

We move on to coastal pastures with Angus beef tartare, permeated by blackened eggplant and dried olive. Earthy and sweet, our 2012 Fanny Sabre Cotes de Beaune Rouge Burgundy makes the ideal coupling. Still there are three more dishes to come; and each one we fawn over.

The new Hobart, post-Mona, is dashing, yet unpretentious. Refined but still raw. It is, after all, just two steps from wilderness, and Australia's last stop before Antarctica. Here in the elegant pared back space of Franklin, you can literally taste the place. "So, when are you coming to Hobart again?" asks Alice.

"Soon," I answer. "Very soon".

## THE DETAILS: FRANKLIN

30 ARGYLE ST, HOBART, 02 6234 3375, [FRANKLINHOBART.COM.AU](http://FRANKLINHOBART.COM.AU)

### Verdict

Farm (and ocean)-to-table fans seeking a menu with edge, are set to be thrilled at Franklin. The price tag is determined by how exotic you decide to go.

### Score

★★★★★

### We rated

The audacious, umami-weighted menu, combined with knowledgeable, easy service. The kitchen

being 'centre stage' is a winner, too.

### We'd change

It'd be great to have a wider range of 'affordable' wines to choose from. The cheapest bottle is \$50, with most ranging between \$60 to \$80.

### Notes

Open Tuesday to Saturday from 10am, the daytime menu is cafe in style. Visit in the evening for the full culinary experience.

