Spoiled for choice

What connects the two spaces is a go-ahead management team — led by owners Damien Gannon and Brad Neilson — and a very able kitchen brigade. They have put tiny Tinamba Boogs all round here and Home and Away on the wide screen. Just another country watering hole, you might think, until you step into Tinamba’s restaurant next door. Suddenly, you’re in a more gentled place. A dining room of pleated lamps and linen napkins where a log heater glows in one corner and a black grand piano awaits some ivory tinkling in the other.

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But there’s a tendency here to over decorate. A carefully cooked (230gm) slab of Gippsland porterhouse ($38, above) came attended by (cold) pickled cauliflower, potato mustard nicoise and a cheese croquette when all it really needed was the shiraz jus and a cos lettuce salad. Elsewhere, baked pork loin comes with potato chickpea “smash” ($36), beef cheek with stir-fried Asian greens and sesame carrot puree ($36).

Tinamba offers half a dozen desserts and the best way to sample them is to order the Quartet for Two ($18, right). Expect treats such as strawberry sorbet, pistachio meringue and a peach tea meringue.

DRINKS

Not just Boogs. The Tinamba keeps a good cellar, offers personable and well informed. On a quietish midweek evening, staff are personable and well informed. But, please, let’s see wines by the glass. The Tinamba team, there’s no doubting their enthusiasm.

VERDICT

If ambition sometimes gets the better of the Tinamba team, there’s no懷疑 their enthusiasm

Simon plant@news.com.au

If you like this you'll like these ...

NORTH

TANI EAT AND DRINK

100 Gavan St, Bright

Destination dish

Harrietteville trout and coal potatoes

TINAMBA HOTEL

1-6 Tinamba- Seaton Rd, Tinamba

5455 1484

FOOD

Modern Australian

HOURS

Lunch Wed-Sun, dinner Wed-Sat

CHIEF

Daniel Keck

BOOKINGS

Yes

PERFECT FOR

Midweek lunches, elegant dinners

DESTINATION

Eye fillet with fondant potato

NOISE FACTOR

Very pleasing

ONLINE

tinambahotel.com.au

REVIEW BY

Simon Plant

PICTURES

Andrew Tauber

REVIEWS ARE

UNANNOUNCED AND

PAID FOR BY

WEEKEND

RESTAURANTS ARE NOT

REVIEWED IN THE FIRST

MONTH OF OPENING

WEST

PICKLED PIG

78 Liebig St, Warrnambool

Destination dish

Pork belly, nashi flakes and caramelised fennel

SOUTH

BARN & CO

238 Myers Rd, Balnarring

Destination dish

Beef cheek, almond, heirloom carrots

OLD GOLD

Reviews of classic cafes and restaurants that have stood the test of time

WYAGOIN’? In they come, out of the paddocks and into the front bar of Gippsland’s Tinamba Hotel. It’s modern Australian food. From the moment you step into Tinamba’s restaurant, your dining options become more than just a choice between a Chicken Parma with fries and a chicken parma with a twice-baked Maffra blue cheese souffle.

As you step past the open kitchen, you’re greeted by the mouth-watering doughy aroma of pizza draws us into the restaurant as soon as we open the door.

The friendly staff usher us through the cozy dining room with walls covered in black-and-white family photographs, snapshots of an Italian childhood and promise of a family-friendly affair.

The traditional southern Italian menu reveals an inviting choice of pizzas, pastas, and entrees, such as cauliflower fritters topped with gorgonzola and poached veal and chicken meatballs served with polenta and gremolata.

The pizzas follow the Italian tradition of simplicity and quality when it comes to toppings and the bases are made from house-milled organic flour.

We choose a proseccootto pizza ($19/$24) to share, which is topped with marscapone, prosciutto, rocket and parmigiana on a tomato base.

My pick of the menu is the Moreton Bay bug pasta (Macancona Calabrese, $32). Chunks of tender bug meat are tossed through ribbons of housemade pasta with artichokes, semi-dried tomatoes, fresh basil, chilli and garlic.

The Filea Calabrese ($27.50) is also popular with diners — traditional Calabrian pasta served with a rich pork ragu.

The helpful wait staff are on hand to offer freshly shaved parmesan or pepper from a comically enormous metre-long pepper grinder named “Stanley”.

We wash it all down with glasses of Montepulciano d’Abruzzo from the well-balanced Aussie/Italian wine list.

With bustling bellies, we turn to the dessert list. There are six desserts to choose from, including a chocolate and hazelnut tart ($44.50) and a vanilla panna cotta with a hint of licorice ($12.50), but, remembering my friend’s suggestion, we opt for the tiramisu ($14.50).

Creamy and indulgent with layers of espresso- and amaretto-soaked sponge and topped with crunchy candied pistachios, we agree that this is the best tiramisu we’ve ever had.

ISA JUDSON