



NE

the Room, lower  
artin Pl, Sydney.  
D) or visit [www](http://www).  
Open Monday

nd stylish. This  
ple of Cheese' is a  
and wine lovers.  
sets a romantic  
black marble floor  
decor keeps things  
e soundtrack: Soft  
perfect backdrop  
versations. **Signature**  
Cheese and Wine  
e expertly matched  
wines and seasonal  
cks: Graze on a  
(\$8.90); three portions  
ses, quince paste and  
r. Lovers seeking a  
away. **Wow factor:**  
selection of more  
and 100 seasonal  
bar were an animal,  
cute meerkat. Once  
you'll never forget it.

Sydney bar scene,  
[Secrets.com](http://Secrets.com).

To make labne, line a sieve with muslin and place over a bowl. Spoon yoghurt mixed with salt into sieve. Fold over muslin to cover. Refrigerate for 2-3 days or until thick. Roll labne into balls and coat with dukkah to serve.

You'll find more great kitchen ideas at [www.taste.com.au](http://www.taste.com.au).



# GLUTTON

CIVIC DINING Civic Hotel, 388 Pitt St, Sydney. Call (02) 8080 7000

When it comes to Greek food, well, it's all Greek to me. So I've enlisted a Greek friend to join me for dinner at Civic Dining. The revamped restaurant is the brainchild of Greek-Australian chef Peter Conistis (of Omega fame). After skipping up the stairwell of the Art Deco hotel, we enter a spacious, dimly lit dining room. I opt for a seat facing the baby grand in the corner, while my friend faces the equally grand bar. Leather banquettes, dark floorboards and bare wooden tables give the place a jazz-bar vibe - which is undone by the background hip-hop soundtrack. After evaluating the 'Greeknness' of the menu, we surmise it's a fusion of modern Mediterranean and traditional fare. Over Aegean wine, I nibble on my hiramasa kingfish kibbeh nayeh (\$22), a tasty twist on the traditional Lebanese dish, given a tangy lift from preserved lemon inside and horseradish tzatziki on top. My friend loves the omelette flavour of her blue swimmer crab and haloumi tartlet (\$24), although the crab is sparse. But her main of caramelised king prawns and mussels on a bed of spicy pumpkin orzo (\$33) - rice-shaped pasta - makes amends with its generous portions. Meanwhile, I'm struggling with my slow-braised veal shank with a pancetta, baked giant beans and mushroom (\$33) moat. (The beans aren't that big - but they're 'giant' on flavour.) And I just can't resist the crispy Greek fries with oregano and melted kefalotyri cheese (\$9). Spoil for choice, we share a decadent chocolate baklava (\$14) and a syrup-topped mastic pannacotta (\$14). We'll be making a very slow descent down those stairs. **PATRICIA VIEIRA**

## Three of a find... gourmet dippers

**1. Paradise Beach Purveyors Wholemeal Pita Bits, \$5.20.** Everyone will reach for more when these crisp, bite-size pita bits hit the table. The wholemeal adds a nutty, toasty depth of flavour, while the thin texture of the baked pita means you don't need to pile on the dip for the perfect partnership. Stockists: gourmet food stores.



**2. The Fine Cheese Co Charcoal Crackers, \$8.95.** Classy, versatile and always fashionable, all good things come in black. Once prescribed for gastro-intestinal distress, charcoal crackers are back in vogue, as their malty flavour matches most cheeses and dips. Stockists: Jones the Grocer and gourmet food stores.



**3. Tucker's Coriander & Cracked Black Pepper Natural Gourmet Crackers, \$3.85.** With a distinctive triangular cut, these are well-shaped to scoop out salsas and dips. Spices are mixed through the dough before baking for a balanced, robust flavour from tip to base. Stockists: Coles, Woolworths or call 1300 665 051.



STUART MACGILL

## Off the bat

"The breakfast wine for every occasion..." The words on the label leapt out at me, bringing back memories of the days when I shared a table with a sweet, bubbly Italian.

In the latter half of the '90s, I was the self-appointed fun facilitation consultant for Sydney after dark. I adopted hip nightspot Grand Pacific Blue Room as my office, and I rarely missed a day's work. The food, music, drinks and, especially, the staff were of the highest quality.

Looking back, I have much to thank the manager for. Not only was she a quality-control specialist, she patiently supplied me with proof that wine was also produced outside South Australia. My world of wine expanded, and I now have a flavour to match every occasion.

One night, she brought out a moscato or, in her terms, breakfast wine. I wasn't a huge fan of dessert wines, but you can't say no to an Italian for breakfast. For the next few years, there was always a sweet, slightly fizzy moscato at my place.

Eventually, we drifted apart, but when winemaker Andrew Marks showed me **The Wanderer Moscato 2007 (\$14, 375ml)** and I realised it was breakfast wine, it all came flooding back. OK, so it's from the Yarra Valley, not Europe, but it still manages to strike a chord with my sweet, bubbly wife. Available from [www.boccaccio.com.au](http://www.boccaccio.com.au) or call 0415 529 639.

Stuart MacGill, a member of the Aussie cricket team, is renowned for his wicked leg spin and love of wine.