



# CoCo at the Roxy

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**Cafe:** The Roxy provides a fitting symbol for Wellywood - and with much more dignity than any naff line of giant lettering along the Miramar hills, writes David Burton.

Awaiting your movie at The Roxy Cinema, you feel you've entered the set already. It's as though you've stepped through a portal, back into the golden age of Hollywood.

There's big band jazz in the air, and, any moment now, Groucho Marx is going to poke his head through the thicket of potted palms that delineates the cafe from the foyer.

Behind the 1928 cinema facade this is a brand new building, yet happily, the illusion is of a retro refit. To be true to the era, I suppose, CoCo ought to be dishing up oyster soup, roast beef and horseradish sauce, and trifle and cream. But the repertoire it serves is wholly modern and global.

The chef here, Nick Spicer, was formerly sous chef at Matterhorn, and during the Roxy's long period of construction, owner Valentina Dias employed him at her other Miramar eatery, Cafe Polo.

A first sight, CoCo's menu might seem a little disjointed and bitsy, until you realise that the 12-strong section of sharing plates forms a coherent core. Everything else is an aside.

This being a suburban cinema cafe, it must cater for the full spectrum of society: snacks for the tyre-kickers, scrambled eggs on toast for the kids, salads for the ladies who lunch, burgers for the plebs. As for grumpy old Uncle Albert, too uptight and set in his ways to share, the pasta or the risotto is about the nearest he'll get to having a conventional main all to himself. No steak here, sorry, mate.

Priced between \$9 and \$12, about three sharing plates per diner would be needed to really feel replete. It works out to about the same as, or perhaps slightly less than, an entree and a main elsewhere.

It's not fine dining, and the presentation here is fairly rustic, at times even bordering upon messy. But what really matters is the subtle play of textures and flavours, which shine through here in abundance.

"Salmon sashimi with fennel, orange and wasabi cream" speaks lip-smackingly for itself, as do the orange and ginger roast pork ribs.

Other sharing plates revealed hidden flavours, such as exhilarating dashes of fish sauce and vanilla in the chilli and lime dipping sauce, which came with the coconut- poached chicken rice wraps with fresh herbs - most notably coriander.

Granted, our grilled prawns looked a little dark and ragged, but at least you could see and taste the chermoula coating. The accompaniments here were a light corn bread, chorizo and corn succotash.

Still on the Americana theme, there are crispy chicken wings with cucumber salsa, bathed in smoky chipotle butter.

The tables for two here are the standard restaurant size (that is, tiny) but the waiting staff have a solution to the perennial problem of crowding the table surface with multiple sharing plates: they bring out a cake stand, with arms that fold out.

Our waitron was efficient and quietly unobtrusive, able to answer questions, such as whether "gwertz [sic] babas" meant babas sprinkled with gewurztraminer. (They were, so no thanks - give me rum babas or nothing).

Fortunately, the creativity of the "cream brule [sic]" extended beyond its spelling: there was a bottom layer of cooked date puree and a rose and pistachio "spoon" with which to scoop out the custard, if not to crack the hard, totally pukka toffee cap.

While many patrons will treat CoCo as an elegant adjunct to a night at the movies, there's no reason why you can't make an evening of it. Provided you stick to the sharing plates, you can dine around the coffee tables upstairs, where a magnificent ceiling fresco references Fritz Lang's 1927 film Metropolis.

This \$7.1-million cinema is classic 1930s art deco to a T, yet, in the details, the hand of Weta is everywhere to be seen - in the sinuous front-door handles, the lamps, the banister ends, and of course, the statues of Gollum and Jake Sully. The Roxy, then, provides a fitting symbol for Wellywood - and with much more dignity than any naff line of giant lettering along the Miramar hills.

### **Coco at the Roxy**

Roxy Cinema, 5 Park Rd, Miramar Ph 388 5555

Fully licensed

Open seven days for lunch and dinner

Price range of sharing plates: \$5.50 to \$12

### **- The Dominion Post**