

FOOD & DRINK

à la carte

with fiona stack

Bird's eye

Birdcage is not your average restaurant. Yes, you can order food, a bottle of wine and finish with coffee and dessert, but that's not really the point. It's more about being social; enjoying food and wine and friends in an unstructured environment.

Sit at the bar and order a glass of wine from the smart list which leans towards the more aromatic white varieties such as riesling and gewurtztraminer and the lighter style reds such as pinot noir, merlot and merlot. Or enjoy the airy window tables and comfortable banquettes.

The sushi (\$16) is super-fresh - they don't open Mondays because they can't get fresh fish - while the wonton age small wontons filled with sour plum paste, basil and cheese, \$6.50) are an example of the way Birdcage combines Mediterranean and Japanese influences.

Shake no marine (\$10.50) is a gravlax

THE PLACE Birdcage, 129 Fitzroy Street, St Kilda (The George Foyer)
Tel: 9534 0277

OWNERS Neil Prentice, Bruce Dowding

CHEF Kozu Nomura

OPEN Monday to Sunday, lunch Monday and Sunday

CARDS BC, MC, V, AMEX

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of salmon with a seaweed dressing and comes with shiny, succulent orange-gold balls of superb salmon roe.

It is a refreshing and innovative change from the ubiquitous gravlax with creme fraiche.

A miso-rahmen (\$15) comes with minced chicken and vegetables in a miso soup base with tender rahmen noodles. It



is a delicate and satisfying meal in itself and slurping is compulsory.

After three visits we still haven't managed to get through all the choices on the menu (but we gave it a darn good try).

Don't go to Birdcage expecting the usual restaurant experience, because you'll be disappointed.

Go to enjoy the care that Prentice, Dowding and Nomura have put into everything from the service and the wine list to the amazing crockery.

Birdcage is all about enjoying life and the good things in it. ■