



ONE GOOD REASON

Asetra,
58 Darling St, Balmain

Next time you need a good coffee and a croque madame (ham, béchamel and fried egg on ciabatta, \$9), head to this cute sandwich bar overlooking the harbour. The pastries and cakes are worth the trip, too.

To keep spinach fresh, don't wash before storing. Water speeds up decomposition.

For more handy hints, visit www.taste.com.au.



GLUTTON

*Lotforty, 40 Kings Ln, Darlinghurst.
Call (02) 9380 2728 or visit www.lotforty.com.*

It's a tough gig sitting in the shadow of uber-chef Christine Manfield's Universal. A stone's throw from the much-heralded nosh spot, this newbie is so modest, don't blink and you may still miss it. When we finally find it, our seven-strong girls-only contingent fills most of the bottom half of this two-storey Mod Oz tapas joint. In ladylike fashion, we agree on a double serve of six of the tapas, starting with the fried ricotta and mascarpone balls (\$12), which are crunchy on the outside and perfectly gooey in the middle. The twice-roasted pork belly with barbecued onions and seeded mustard sauce on green beans (\$14) satisfies the carnivores and is happily paired with the caramelised pear, gorgonzola cheese and rocket salad (\$9). Next, a zesty, shallow-fried salt and pepper squid with saffron aioli (\$13), and refreshing Thai chicken with eggplant and chilli jam (\$12) served san choy bow-style on lettuce leaves. But we have a clear favourite: the duck crepe with plum sauce, eschalots and broccolini (\$15). The delicate meat is to die for. So is dessert. We opt for three of the four on the menu and manners go out the window (did I say ladylike?) as we attack the banana tartlet with cream caramel and mascarpone (\$9), meringue with lemon curd and mascarpone (\$8), and flourless chocolate almond cake with coffee butterscotch sauce and almond praline (\$8). Given the kitchen's not big enough to swing a cat, we're duly impressed with the efficiency of tonight's service. This restaurant can certainly hold its own against the big guns. **KLAUDYNA MORAWSKI**