



## It's back!

Euro and its companion restaurant The Culpeper have reinvigorated the Viaduct.



Euro



The Culpeper

**Y**es indeed, four spoons for Euro! You should book yourself a summer treat. I say this with a touch of sadness — after all, it means I will not get to read another recipe for my own testicles (which is how Euro responded the year we dropped it from our top 50 list). But despite what some people mutter into their merlot, *Metro* has never had a vendetta against Euro. Back in the day, we just didn't think it was good enough.

What's changed? Well, most obviously, it has a new executive chef. Gareth Stewart has moved over from Soul with aplomb, bringing his expertise with fish, adding some assured statements with the meat dishes and retaining the flair with entrées and desserts that has always been a strength of the place.

There's a market fish ceviche with carrot and ginger, chilli and lime: served in a pile in a bowl, it was one mesmerising mouthful after another. A green gazpacho, with perfectly presented pieces of pickled cucumber and the broth poured over at the table, that had the same transporting effect. A rhubarb-based dessert with every flavour note so fresh... There was a point in this meal when I started to wonder, would they mind if I stayed all night so I could keep sampling the menu?

Mind you, there is a lot of meat. The culture of the place has remained very male: it's the only restaurant I've been in for a long time where there were several tables with no women diners at all, and also the only restaurant where



there was not at least one table with a group of women. For all the delights of entrées and desserts, the menu is built around boring old fillet steak, and that's what the customers order. You can get a much better cut of scotch fillet, but it comes as a 350g slab.

Euro is smaller now, with owners the Nourish Group having created a separate and more casual bistro at the city end. And the décor has been quietly made over. It's welcoming, although also slightly odd: the back wall is filled with John Reynolds word blocks, which make a nice pattern but can't be read unless you're sitting there or peering over the shoulders of the diners who are. Art reduced to decorative shapes: it comes to them all.

The service is impeccable: friendly, attentive, extremely knowledgeable, and idiosyncratic. The floorstaff at Euro tend to have personalities that define their work, rather than being subsumed by it, and I think that's a marvellous thing.

From the terrace there's always something diverting to watch on the water; inside, it's like a cocoon.

Euro is safe, yes, but very satisfying. I like it a lot.

The rest is far more likeable. The floorstaff are friendly and functional, and the bartender made me a martini that was so dirty I suspect he tipped in half a can of olive juice. Not exquisite, but definitely tasty.

As for the food, I ate a divine heirloom tomato salad with slices of big green toms, halves of little yellow ones, ricotta and strawberries, and a few decorative wild strawberries too, all put together with a sharp sweet dressing. It was the perfect counterpoint to some of the most delicious brisket I've ever had. Fourteen hours on the fire, juicy, fatty and also sweetly meaty, it fell apart to the touch.

Even better, they serve market fish, baked in the fire pit "on the bone", which means you get everything but the head. I had tarakihi, served with green papaya, iceberg lettuce and a Vietnamese nam jim dressing, and it was brilliant — food fit for some fabulous feast. There was far too much for one person, although I didn't let that stop me.

The other thing I really liked: they played Nina Simone singing Randy Newman's "Baltimore". Not all the music was so good, but a song like that is always reason to be happy. 🍷

### EURO

SHED 22, PRINCES WHARF, VIADUCT.  
PH 309-9866. EUROBAR.CO.NZ  
**HOURS:** SEVEN DAYS, NOON TILL LATE.  
**DINNER BILL:** STARTERS \$16-\$27;  
MAINS \$21-\$52; DESSERTS \$17-\$18.

### THE CULPEPER

SHED 22, PRINCES WHARF, VIADUCT.  
PH 320-4373. THECULPEPER.CO.NZ  
**HOURS:** SEVEN DAYS, 11.30AM TILL LATE.  
**DINNER BILL:** STARTERS \$18-\$23;  
MAINS \$21-\$45; DESSERTS \$16.

#### HOW WE REVIEW

RESTAURANTS ARE USUALLY VISITED AT LEAST TWICE AND RATED FOR WHAT THEY ARE TRYING TO DO: A SUPERB BISTRO AND SUPERB FINE-DINING PLACE BOTH GET 5 SPOONS. WE PAY FOR OUR MEALS AND IF POSSIBLE DO NOT DECLARE OUR PRESENCE.

WE'D EAT HERE IF WE HAD TO	
GOOD, BUT IT REALLY SHOULD BE BETTER	
VERY GOOD	
EXTREMELY GOOD	
SUPERB: AMONG THE VERY BEST OF ITS KIND	

**G**iven that, you might think The Culpeper is where they let their hair down. Sadly, it has a seasidey décor, especially on the terrace, that looks like it was thrown together with bargain bin items from Briscoes, with a kitset colour scheme to match. That Princes Wharf site deserves better. As for the name: when did it become okay to copy a London bankers' hangout?