

# Two be 3C

New Opening

Tempted simply to take a single spoonful and live off the taste for the rest of his days, **Dave Smith** stumbles upon the perfect crême brûlée at Chews Lane's **3C**. Photos by Chris Coad

I always used to think of Chews Lane as nothing more than a windswept walkway as I was struggling through it to take library books back to their Victoria Street home. It was simply a connecting space between Willis Street and the streets beyond. Now Chews Lane has had a flash makeover. While no competition for Courtenay Place, we see an upmarket precinct incorporating shops, Midland Sushi, Espresso Bar, Gotham and Coffee Club; and sitting opposite, 3C.

3C is short for Colonial Carrying Company. It occupies a considerable space that goes along the harbour end of Chews Lane and around the corner into Victoria Street. There is an imposing bar on the ground floor with divergent eating alcoves sitting all around, and a mezzanine restaurant (where we ate) sitting somewhat unobtrusively above it all. The soft furnishings merge into the rich, dark brown of the commercial colour spectrum and this is balanced out by metallic silvers and whites.

We arrived as a hungry threesome early on a Saturday evening. The waitress was friendliness incarnate and she went to considerable lengths to make our overseas guest from Germany welcome and at ease on only her second day in New Zealand.

There appears to be a conscious effort made to have many of those good nutritional things that show up in the variety of our New Zealand diet. Between us we had kofta with tabouleh and yoghurt, arancini (mushroom risotto balls) with smoked cheddar stuffing and tomato relish, and a chunky serving of Aoraki smoked salmon. All of this we shared. The kofta were hot and tasty, with an accent on the tabouleh, which was mouth friendly and light.

The strong mushroom flavour of the arancini complemented the smokiness of the cheese. A dazzlingly colourful salmon with a well-rounded flavour represented a new leap in fish tastes for our German guest. We were all impressed with its texture and quality.

The 3C mains, though only five in number, competently cover the lamb, beef, chicken, pork and fish choices with sufficient originality and style to

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do the job. The chicken supreme is marinated with garlic and thyme and comes with baby carrots, creamed leeks and chicken gravy. The beef fillet is accompanied by a tasty smoked tuna mash, and shitake and field mushrooms drizzled with a red wine jus.

I ordered the pork rack with five spice confit duck spring roll, sautéed greens and plum sauce. Pork is something of a test piece in that the chef walks a fine line between over-fatty meat and extreme dryness. This pork rack took us teasingly close to dryness but the beautifully trimmed down natural fat coming in with the plum sauce ensured an exquisite balance of taste and substance.

We were impressed by the wine list, and again the restaurant aims for a short well-chosen one. We enjoyed the sensibly priced glasses of Triplebank pinot gris (Marlborough) and Nanny Goat pinot noir (central Otago), while noting with approval the Yalumba viognier from Australia and the half dozen or so blended reds from Australia, California and Italy.

Desserts include warm chocolate fondant, crême brûlée and lemon tart with vanilla foam. The crême brûlée, however, is possibly the highlight. The hard top is uniform and yields willingly into the satiny mixture below. Colourwise, the smooth mixture leans towards 3C's trademark coffee brown. There are actually three species of brûlée and one I recall being mentioned was a citrus variety. I was tempted simply to take a single spoonful and live off the taste for the rest of my days.

3C is beautifully positioned, the excellent bar is well patronised and hopefully many of those propping it up will, in due course, gravitate to the more sedate upstairs where few, if any, will be disappointed.



**3C Bar & Restaurant**  
56 Victoria Street, Chews Lane  
Ph: 913 1224  
[www.3cbar.co.nz](http://www.3cbar.co.nz)  
Open: Mon-Sun 11am-late  
Mains: \$25 Vege: Yes Licensed: Yes BYO: No