

to diva



HARD TO FAULT: Stylish, yet comfortable, Redoak is ideal for a weeknight drink.

Pictures: JANIE BARRETT



REDOAK BOUTIQUE BEER CAFE

201 Clarence Street, Sydney, (02) 9262 3303.
Opening hours: Monday to Saturday from 11am until late.
House whites: \$6 and \$7. House reds: \$6 to \$8.
Beer: Organic pale ale \$4.50 for 250ml.
Vibe: A job-free place to relax with a top-quality brew after work.
Rating: **8/10**

➤ BARFLY Hannah Edwards

FINALLY a Sydney bar that is neither grungy old-school nor an overrenovated stainless-steel-and-glass clone selling overpriced drinks.

While busy on the night we visit, Redoak Boutique Beer Cafe on Clarence Street in the city is a stylishly decorated bar with plenty of comfortable nooks where their aromatic, and frequently exotic, brews can be enjoyed.

The decor is a little bit European with Parisian bistro-style frosted glass bulbs hanging from shiny brass fittings and an old-style bar topped with a vase of beautiful blooms. It's a popular spot with city executives who are relaxing after work on the velvety

lounges clustered near the windows and on the high stools that line the series of long wooden tables.

The bar staff are happy to explain their complicated but delicious beers that range from a real English ale dispensed from a hand pump, to the flavoursome choc-cherry stout to the Vienna lager. With most seats in the bar area already full, a waiter seats us in the dining area after we've ordered a variety of bar snacks. We sip at our drinks - a delicious pale organic ale

and a fruity, dark Saint Nicholas. And just as we start grumbling that the bar snacks are taking a very long time to arrive, a slightly embarrassed waiter arrives to tell us "somebody else" has consumed our selection.

Finally our food arrives and we devour a bowl of hand-cut chips with horseradish aioli (\$6), a Mediterranean plate laden with morsels of prawns wrapped in coppa with a smear of fenugreek dip, chorizo pieces, charred sardines and stuffed calamari on a tasty pickled paw paw salad (\$15). We also try the powerfully flavoured smoked salmon and crab cakes (\$10).

Everything is strongly flavoured and quite salty - classic bar food that serves to stir up an ongoing thirst.

For dessert we chose the spectacularly luscious orange chocolate chip semifreddo with mandarin sorbet topped with a pinch of Persian fairy floss (\$10).

Several other diners were tucking into tasting boards on which four small glasses of different beers are matched with small serves of food. If they could just match the right bar snacks to the right customer, it would be difficult to fault Redoak as a perfect spot to spend a workday evening.