



WINING, DINING AND DANCING: A full French experience at Slide with Claire de Lune, below.



BITTE: Lowenbrau Bier Akademie.

## TASTE SENSATIONS

## Champagne masterclass

Sample the best bubbles and food at WineWorks champagne masterclasses. Led by fizz expert "Champagne Jayne" Powell, the workshops pair the world's best drops - including Cristal, Dom Perignon and Krug - with food by top chefs. Novices and connoisseurs alike can experience a "totally independent gastronomic guided tour around the Champagne region". The Bastille Day themed Quel Champagne Etes Vous masterclass is with Tony Bilson on July 12 (eight champagnes matched to a seven-course degustation dinner).

More info at [www.wineworksinternational.com](http://www.wineworksinternational.com) or

email [info@wineworksinternational.com](mailto:info@wineworksinternational.com) to book.

## Bier Akademie

The Lowenbrau Keller at The Rocks (corner Playfair and Argyle streets) holds a monthly Bier Akademie where you can taste and learn all about Bavarian beers, guided by cellar master Dominic Dighton. For \$30, you'll find out more about

the history and characteristics of various premium brews.

Phone 8297 4111 or 9247 7785.

## Degustation Dating

At Fast Impressions' Degustation Dating events you share each course with a different dinner date - a culinary take on speed dating. The next ones will be on May 16 and 30 at Mint Bar and Dining, 62 Bridge Street, with sparkling wine on arrival, eight courses of food by chef Jeff Campbell and two wines to match, followed by a dessert cocktail and dessert. \$119.

For information and bookings, phone 1300 783 447.

## Mixology classes

Blu Horizon Bar's team of bartenders, including world champion flair bartender Loy Catada, pass on trade secrets at the Shangri-La's mixology classes. Of course, in the name of education all cocktails are sampled and there are tasty canapes to soak up the alcohol. A two-hour class (6-10 guests) costs \$85 per person.

Phone 9250 6247.

## PLAY

## Dining out of the box

Amy Cooper dons her best drag for a degustation dinner with Claire de Lune.

THIS town has its share of celebrity chefs, but none quite as glamorous as Claire de Lune. Gliding among the candelabra-adorned tables in a silk pants-suit with her hair teased into a blonde halo, she oozes Catherine Deneuve-style French chic.

And she's not just a pretty face. Dish after delicious dish concocted by Claire emerges from the kitchen at Slide, Oxford Street's ostentatious new bar: cheese soufflé, tender lamb shanks, smooth crème brûlée. And just to seal the whole French deal, Claire hops up on stage and belts out some Edith Piaf standards to accompany the six-course feast.

This is one of those "only in Sydney" evenings; a perfectly executed degustation menu presented by its creator - a French master chef and drag queen - served by staff wearing kilts and complemented by a fire-eating illusionist.

Claire is the new front-of-house restaurant manager at Slide, and the Grande Dinner with Claire on Sunday evening is one of her first innovations in the job. For \$60, diners in groups large or small can sample the talents of the acclaimed French chef also known as Marc Kuzma. As Claire, his credentials include cooking on the *Midday* show with Kerri-Anne and teaching at the Seafood School at Sydney Fish Market. And, of course, crooning in her/his

native French while wearing sequined, slinky frocks.

Degustation, or a "tasting menu", is the hottest wining and dining trend in Sydney. As well as serving multiple sample-sized dishes to show off a chef's skills on their regular menus, many restaurants are now offering special packages like this one. It's a fun way to enjoy good food, wine or cocktails and learn a little at the same time.

As the dishes appear, Claire works the tables, chatting to diners about the food while keeping a close eye on the kitchen. Tonight, she's concerned about the soufflé. "It's a big challenge for a chef to present a perfect soufflé for 70 people," she tells us. "So forgive us if it isn't quite right." She needn't have worried - the soufflé

has risen to the occasion and is as fluffy as Claire's hair.

We polish off a dessert sampler and illusionist Timothy Woon takes the stage. Now we see Claire really earn her money. As if whipping up a gourmet meal and entertaining her diners isn't enough, the game drag queen must now be sawn into three pieces. Quel horreur!

Timothy swallows clouds of flame as enthusiastically as we munched our soufflés, and then comes the piece de resistance. Claire is folded into a box, the lid is locked shut, Tim waves a wand, then throws open the lid... et voila! Out comes Marc - not a shred of make-up and wearing a man's suit.

The diners, warmed by great food and wine, go wild. "You don't see that at Neil Perry's place," says one. But the fun isn't over yet. Dancing continues beyond midnight.

If this is the future of Sydney dining, we're keen to taste more.

Slide: 41 Oxford Street, Sydney. Phone 8915 1899 or email [stephen@slide.com.au](mailto:stephen@slide.com.au)



TASTY: Degustation Dating at Fast Impressions.

