

**GILBERT STREET
HOTEL**
Reviews

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Pub food or gourmet meal, you can get it all at this establishment / Gilbert Street Hotel

Situated in the thriving south east corner of the city, the Gilbert Street Hotel is the kind of pub everyone wants to be their local. Easy walking distance from both the Central Market area and South Terrace, the hotel boasts spacious beer gardens, a renovated interior design with dramatic furnishings and rich colours and a discreet gaming area.

Pub food is a step up from the usual here with everything from tapas and the cheap pub plates to the gourmet meals on the Red Room At The Gilbert menu. Give the hamburger a try, considering it was voted South Australia's Favourite Hamburger in the I Love Food Awards 2009. Wash it down with one of the fine wines or beers available, and then dance to the Friday and Saturday night beats being spun by DJs.

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Adelaide Now

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Seared sea scallops with ouzo onion mash and Kashmiri relish.

THE Gilbert Street Hotel's Red Room is turning on a blues/food fusion that's hard to resist.

It's the debut of a live R&B music night at the Gilbert Street Hotel on a Thursday and the smooth tones of the Mike Festa Band resonate from a corner of the front bar. This isn't your new-fangled Beyonce brand of dance-floor doof-doof, however, but real vintage rhythm'n'blues, mixed with cool jazz and rock standards.

The music rates a mention because you won't be able to escape it at the Red Room, which is essentially an extension of the Gilbert's U-shaped front bar.

If you're looking for a little more contemporary soundtrack, lounge DJs fill the spot on Fridays and Saturdays.

Fortunately, the band's volume - and the set list - is just right to provide an unobtrusive backdrop for easy conversation.

The whole atmosphere is equally easy. Customers flow liberally to and from - and between - the tables, the bar and a popular beer garden.

What distinguishes the Red Room from the rest of the bar is that it's, well, red. Deep, glossy, blood-red paint - with darker, coagulated patches - gives the impression of a vampire's boudoir, sitting neatly with the unadorned, chocolate-brown timber tables and chairs.

On this occasion - like many nights - the small dining room is dominated by a few larger groups, at least one of which appears to be a hens' night. It seems a popular place for reunions and group gatherings, so booking is essential.

Physically, little seems to have changed since Luke Saturno, of the Adelaide hotelier family, recently took over. It's a different story in the kitchen where he has appointed former Chifley head chef Grant Schooling.

The new menu is divided into Mates Plates, Pub Plates and dishes which are supposedly specific to the Red Room - although it seems a fair bit of mixing and matching goes on.

Mates Plates are platters designed to share or be picked at over a few drinks in the bar.

Pub Plates, \$13.50-\$16.90, put a more upmarket spin on traditional counter meals - sirloin burgers, pork and fennel sausages, chicken or smoked salmon salads, beer-battered fish and the ubiquitous schnitzels - while the Red Room menu is proper restaurant fare, right down to optional side dishes.

Even though it's fully booked, there seems to be mainly one person providing service in the restaurant. She's doing a sterling job but, inevitably, some confusion arises.

This is mostly in the form of our main courses, which arrive - albeit in the hands of someone else from the kitchen - before our starters have been consumed, let alone the plates cleared away. This is sort of understandable because, technically, the Gilbert doesn't offer any entrees. We've cobbled together a main course of that day's scallops special and one of the Mates Plates as starters. The scallops are stupendous: plump, firm and juicy, lightly seared and beautifully arranged around a central tower of onion mash laced with ouzo. Each scallop sits atop a drizzled bed of orange Kashmiri relish, although the overall impression is more Moroccan than Indian. Mates Plates are available in three varieties: a selection of Alexandrina Gold Medal hard cheeses, an antipasto-style Mediterranean plate and a Farm Gate plate. We select the latter which, according to our waitress, has more of a Barossa feel. I'm not certain how the marinated baby octopuses fit in, but their buttery texture is the highlight of a platter filled with sweet semi-dried tomatoes, spicy sausage, fragrant dried fruits and soft cheeses. The early arrival of our mains leads to a happy compromise, whereby the cheese and fruit remains of our platter will be returned at meal's end. Had we realised the new chef's status as World Culinary Mushroom Competition champion, we might have been tried the Swiss brown and leek tart, or even the riverside lamb and mushroom pie from the pub menu. Instead, we go for gnocchi in a local blue-vein cheese, topped with crushed pistachios and roasted hazelnuts. Its sauce is fragrant without being overpowering, the nuts offsetting this by adding a hint of texture to the sublimely smooth dumplings. The Hahndorf venison cutlets are expertly charred on the surface and rare throughout, the rich gaminess enhanced by magnificent smoky aromas imparted from a Moroccan spice marinade, tempered with cucumber yoghurt relish. Accompanying smoked sweet potatoes are overdone, however, to the point of being mushy. Again, there is no formal dessert menu but daily \$6 specials are offered, including a green tea panna cotta and a citrus tart - the latter being light, fluffy and very tangy, surrounded by chocolate and berry sauces. A more expensive option, at \$14.90, is the chocolate petit fours, five slightly-larger-than-bite-sized selections ranging from an extraordinary fudge and Christmas cake-like brownie to variations on tirami-su and mousse-topped pastries. Each dish on the Red Room menu is paired with South Australian wines selected by Saturno and available by the glass. Red Room's menu choices are limited, but Saturno and Schooling are presenting hotel fare in an intriguing new rustic and regional light which suggests the best may be yet to come.

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October 28th 2008



PUBS can suffer from the Goldilocks syndrome some are too flashy, others too grungy, but occasionally you find one which is just right.

The Gilbert Street Hotel hits the mark and is a classic, laidback Aussie pub with a funky streak.

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