



One To Watch
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Sepia Sydney, Australia

*Multiple influences brought together at stylish
Sydney destination*

If Australia can credit the meeting of Europe and Asia as one of the secrets of its culinary success, Martin Benn is certainly well placed to make the most of it. The British-born chef got his start in classical brigades in London under Michel Lorrain at The Oak Room and Marco Pierre White at The Criterion.

But to look at his menus today at Sepia, his coolly elegant Sydney restaurant – which are as likely to trade in kabosu, sansho and dashi as they are jamón, caviar and quail eggs – it becomes clear that the years he spent heading the kitchen at local landmark Tetsuya's more than made an impression.

At Sepia, dishes focussed in large part on luxe seafood such as Western Australian scampi and Tasmanian abalone rely on the umami-muscle of seaweeds and mushrooms rather than butter and stocks for their oomph, while Japanese citrus and wild Australian plants sparkle around the edges.

Genteel service, which is led by Martin's wife Vicky Wild, and a wilfully adventurous wine programme masterminded by sommelier Rodney Setter provide a richly fitting backdrop for Benn's culinary exploration. Éric Ripert was so taken with the restaurant on a recent visit to Australia that he was moved to invite Benn and his team to Le Bémadin to do their thing, thereby sharing the excitement of his discovery with New York. Little wonder, then, that Sepia is this year's One To Watch. Stay tuned.

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