



Sweet DREAMS

A celebrated Melbourne stay reopens as ‘the world’s first dessert hotel’ **SERENA RENNER** gives it a taste test.

The scent of vanilla icing spreads thick through the lobby. There are no cupcakes in sight, but an oversized glass jar magnifies Minties, jelly beans and little bags of fairy floss. “Hey, I haven’t seen this stuff since I was a kid,” says my mate Robbie, reaching for a packet of Wizz Fizz. In an instant, two adults become kids at a lolly shop. Except our cashier counter is the reception desk of Melbourne’s renovated Adelphi Hotel.

After closing last year due to financial hardship, the 34-room boutique property, one block from Cumulus Inc. on trendy Flinders Lane, reopened in November with new owners, a cream-and-dark-chocolate look devised by local design firm Hachem and the promise of sweet surprises. The hotel’s website calls the place ‘the world’s premier dessert hotel’ and describes swinging couches, pillow fragrances and a new restaurant that whips up dessert-themed cocktails. It sounds like a decadent dream. Or maybe a recipe for a massive headache.

After checking into a king suite – outfitted with mid-century-style furnishings, steel surfaces, velvety pillows and a black-and-white carpet reminiscent of licorice allsorts – the ninth-floor pool calls for a pre-dinner dip. The rooftop deck will soon feature a bar and barbecue, but the famous cantilevered

swimming pool will remain the highlight: two metres of it jut out over Flinders Lane, and induce vertigo with glass walls that look down on passing cars and pedestrians.

In the spirit of sweetness, two friends join us at the hotel’s new restaurant – ostensibly a dessert bar, though it serves dinner – called Om Nom. It’s 7:30pm, and the place is noticeably empty considering its location and head-chef Christy Tania, who’s worked with such greats as Alain Ducasse. We flag down our waitress and enquire about the ‘liquid desserts’ cake- and pie-inspired concoctions spiked with liquor. She tactfully suggests the hotel’s versions of the

martini and daiquiri cocktails are more popular. Maybe the dessert concept hasn’t caught on?

I opt instead for a Margaret River sauvignon blanc to pair with shared starters of Wagyu sliders, caramelised scallops, an antipasto sampler and Japanese buckwheat noodles. The antipasto, with its kalamata olive madeleines and a melon-and-prosciutto gelato, is the star of the savoury courses, though truthfully, none of the dishes is outstanding. But then, we didn’t really come for the savoury stuff.

Neither did Om Nom, which becomes even more apparent when the desserts arrive: chocolate soufflé, lemon meringue pie cocktail and a dish called ‘Basil Garden’. Each plate reveals a painstaking attention to detail, especially the Garden, in which scoops of vanilla, olive oil and honey ice-cream are carefully encased in a chocolate-shell ‘pot’, topped with basil gelatin and edible flowers, and sprinkled with cocoa ‘soil’. It tastes as good as it looks.

Sitting beneath the reflective copper ceiling at the end of our meal, I start to feel like a blob of nougat inside a candy wrapper. Thank goodness my room is just upstairs. I say goodnight to my friends, waddle up a few floors and collapse on the plush bed, only to find a caramel-coloured macaron taunting me from the nightstand. I can’t resist. I eat half then crawl under the covers, which are fluffy like whipped cream. I only have myself to blame. I came for indulgence, and the new Adelphi served it with a cherry on top. ■

THE DETAILS

THE VERDICT: A unique hotel building gets the design update and creative concept it deserves. But the dessert bar, while tantalising, doesn’t stand up to surrounding restaurants such as Cumulus Inc., Chin Chin and Ezard for dinner. Go for the last course of the night instead.
THE SCORE: 15/20; great
WE RATED: The sophisticated

design is playful without being gimmicky, and the complimentary extras – from a drink at the restaurant to the house-made fairy floss and macarons – are irresistible. Herb-infused bath products by Appelles wash away the sugar hangover.
WE HATED: The Om Nom waitstaff will need more enthusiasm if they’re going to

convince Melburnians to eat dessert for dinner.
WHERE: 187 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
NOTES: Rooms from \$270 include wi-fi, local phone calls, mini-bar snacks and refreshments as well as a welcome drink at Om Nom.
CONTACT: 03 8080 8888; adelphi.com.au

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