



Fabulous Fiesta A sunny winter Sunday, a vista of vine-covered rolling hills, a pre-lunch margarita and—just when things couldn't get any better—some interactive castanet clicking and no cakage fee. It all turned this already delightful scenario into an afternoon to be remembered.

The castanets were thoughtfully provided on the table by the waitstaff as part of the theme for their Spanish Fiesta lunch, the first in a series of special events at this spectacularly located South-West winery in Caves Road, Wilyabrup. And with a lively Latino band drumming out a hypnotic beat, the capacity lunchtime crowd began to salsa like there was no manana (tomorrow).

For \$40 a head, diners chose from a red wine, white wine, beer or cava platter, which also suggested the appropriate wine or beer to accompany it. The red wine platter featured a tender and rare beef crostini, succulent chunks of braised pork belly topped with Spanish onion jam, potted paprika lamb cubes and herb salad and a duck, broad bean and artichoke salad. Clairault wines—cabernet sauvignon, chardonnay, cabernet merlot, Riesling and Semillon—were available by the bottle and glass as was Spanish cava and beer. Seafood was the main theme if you went the white wine route and beer lovers enjoyed crispy fried squid and jamon croquettes.

And the food was fabulous, right down to the last titbit—with the emphasis on the bit. The portions were definitely tapas-sized, in that they could be placed over the top of a beer bottle to stop the flies going in (which was how tapas came into being in the bars of Barcelona). But, throw in the entertainment supplied by the LC Salsa band with their drums, Andean pipes and some clever box music and it was a great package for about \$60 a head.

Maybe it was all that gyrating that made the two small baked sourdough loaves (gusty and flavoursome at Clairault), which came with Olio Bello leccino olive oil (\$7 a serve), hardly touch the sides at our table. I was still hungary after a cava platter of grilled venison sausage slices (which did a tango on the tongue), shaved iberico jamon (sublime), vinegar cured salmon (sublime again) and a small pot of marinated mussels. There was manchego cheese and some wafer-thin crostini for spreading it on. If the secret to good food is leave them wanting more, the executive chef Tim Taylor is right on the mark.

Thank God we brought the cake for the birthday boy in our party. Yes, we took our own cake. That's one way to test the patience of staff. They didn't flinch. They lit the candles, they served up the cake. They got the band to play Happy Birthday and the whole restaurant chimed in. And, then, they didn't even charge the cakage that everyone's going on about. They'd be within their rights if they did. After all, have you ever heard of a restaurant that offers BYO food? All this, while they offered their own dessert platter of crème brulee, pistachio and saffron cake and chocolate moose at \$20 a platter. Now, that's what I call Spanish hospitality.