



## REVIEW: THE OLD CHURCH



Ever since we reviewed the Hawkes Bay Food and Wine Festival last year, we have found ourselves returning to the area again and again. So much to do (so much to drink!) and so many amazing food choices in this blessed microclimate. The five-hour drive from Auckland is picturesque and with the recent Taupo bypass the journey is... *whoosh!* From Wellington the trip is a pleasant 4.5 hours.

Chef Richard Highnam, of Kermadec fame, and his partner Mel have left Auckland and landed themselves at The Old Church Restaurant in Napier. This stunning 1863 church has enjoyed an exquisitely tasteful makeover by Karen Sandler into an international standard dining and event venue.

We arrived on a Saturday night to candlelight and soft lighting under soaring ceilings and felt, well, cocooned in elegance. Olive oil and bread accompanied the menu which had been especially designed for the next four days. We started with oyster shots and

the best ever flash fried baby prawns with an aioli and sweet chilli sauce. Vanilla and Arataki honey glazed duck from Easter Brook Farm and fish of the day were the mains. Beautifully portioned and presented and if we were giving out awards then they would both be award winning.

The local wine recommended by the French (and gorgeous) sommelier Damien was the Navigator from Alpha Domus. Such a good choice that we immediately organised our wine writer to review this delicious drop.

Desserts ranged from the stunning crème brulee, poached pear, hot chocolate fondant with Jaffa ice cream to the very original mere 195-calorie, sugar free Chocolate Amaretto cheesecake with blackberry ice cream.

Gracious and smiling service came from Cassandra who happily introduced us to the new owners Richard and Mel for a quick photo session.

Well, what to do the next day with so many choices in the area? Straight back to The

Old Church for an outdoor lunch. Really, we loved our experience there that much! Tasting flights made for an enjoyable lunch with six glasses of wine matched to tasty morsels.

The menu changes several times a season with a strong emphasis on seafood as well as interesting treatments of local lamb, beef and pork.

And then there is The Old Church Villa. More about that in an upcoming issue!

### THE OLD CHURCH

**ADDRESS:** 199 Meeanee Road, Meeanee, Napier

**PHONE:** 06 844 8866

**WEBSITE:** [www.theoldchurch.co.nz](http://www.theoldchurch.co.nz)

**OPEN:** Wed to Sun, 12pm to 3pm for lunch & 6pm - late for dinner

**BOTTOM LINE:** With a location this breathtaking and food this stunning, you'll be coming again and again!

## RECIPE: DELICIOUS & EASY CRÈME BRÛLÉE

So often we go to wonderful restaurants (like The Old Church, above) and finish our meals with the most glorious, silky dessert of all - the crème brulee. So it was only a matter of time before we tried this brilliant dish out at home.

### INGREDIENTS

2 cups cream	½ cup sugar
2 vanilla pods	1 tsp vanilla essence
4 large egg yolks	Pinch of salt
	4-8 tsp caster sugar

Preheat your oven to 150° celcius.

Pour the cream into a small pot. Add the vanilla pods and heat gently until cream comes to a boil.

In a large bowl, whisk together egg yolks, the ½ cup of sugar, vanilla essence and salt.

Remove the vanilla pods and pour hot cream into the bowl and whisk.

Pour mixture into ramekins and fill to ¾, then

