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Herald food critic **Terry Durack** eats out for a living. So what were the highlights of his month?

Dish

Iberico ham with toasted sourdough and salmorejo @ Jonah's

Looking down from Jonah's over the slow curve of Whale Beach, it's not too much of a stretch to imagine yourself on a sunny Mediterranean cliff top nibbling tapas. But why be there when you could be here, ordering the finest, glossiest, nuttiest Gran Reserva Joselito jamón (\$28) on a thin raft of toast with lightly sautéed Spanish Marcona almonds and traces of gazpacho-like salmorejo emulsion? The dining room could do with more life but a big *hola* to new Spanish-born chef Alfonso Ales, who also riffs with marron and lentil cassoulet, and a brilliant steak with roasted garlic and vegetable crisps.

Jonah's 69 Bynya Road, Whale Beach.
Phone: 9974 5599. jonahs.com.au





**Muss
 broth @ The Union**

Penrith chef and food writer Ross Dobson has solved his own problem about where to go for a glass of wine and a few small plates of deliciousness without leaving Penrith. Teaming with Blue Mountains caterer Jane Jeffery, he's opened a buzzy, back-lane, upstairs, tradesman-entrance tapas bar that's so difficult to find, it's become a bit of a local IQ test. But the blackboard menu of locally sourced produce teamed with Iberian flavours such as piquillo peppers and chimichurri salsa does the trick. The big hit? Juicy, plumped-up mussels cooked in Corona and covered with a green chilli paste and loads of coriander (\$18.50).

The Union 542 High Street (enter from Union Lane), Penrith. Phone: 4721 4501. theunionrestaurant.com.au



Tuna tostadas @ Barrio Chino

Barrio means district in Spanish and Chino means Chinese so Barrio Chino is essentially a Mexican idea of "Chinatown". Why? Because it's the love child of Peter Lew and Nicole Galloway of Potts Point diner Fei Jai and Joe Hargrave of San Francisco's Tacolicious – and it's turning Kings Cross into tequila central for groovy gringos and spicy señoritas. There's loud music, a serious and potentially lethal range of tequilas and great drinking food, including these terrific tostadas (\$12 for four): crisp corn chips topped with tuna, avocado, chipotle aioli and crisped leek. There are also seven different soft tacos, great ceviche and a comforting chicken tortilla soup.

Barrio Chino 28-30 Bayswater Road, Kings Cross. Phone: 8021 9750. barriochino.com.au



side Dish

Hungry for more?

Cheap treat
Chicken and prawn salad with yellow bean soy dressing (\$15) at Shortgrain, one of the treats on the short-but-sweet-and-sour menu at Longrain's newish canteen and take-away. 8-10 Hunt Street, Surry Hills. Phone: 9280 2888.

Best bite
Home-made silky chicken, corn and mushroom shui jiao dumplings (\$9.95) at the birdcage-strewn teahouse of the White Rabbit Gallery, 30 Balfour Street, Chippendale. Phone: 8399 2867.

Cafe stop
Bronte's latest sweet spot, Three Blue Ducks, has silky smooth Single Origin coffee and scrambled eggs on Iggy's toast with black sausage, cucumber yoghurt and redcurrant jam (\$17.50). 143 Macpherson Street, Bronte. No phone.



Albondigas @ The Carrington
Bull's-tail empanadas, squid stuffed with morcilla blood sausage and a rich, bean-central fabada stew are all winners at this born-again Surry Hills corner pub, along with the Single Mother cocktail, a fake take on sangria, which combines red wine, Southern Comfort and ginger beer. It's a lively spot full of colourful Moorish tiles, mounted goats' heads and a pumping open kitchen led by Jamie Thomas, formerly of the London nose-to-nail restaurant St John. Meatball lovers can't go past the pork shoulder and rump steak albondigas (\$15), some of the meatiest, lightest, softest, meatballs ever to lurk in a rich tomato sauce spiked with hot, sweet and smoked paprika, cayenne and sherry vinegar.

The Carrington 563 Bourke Street, Surry Hills.
Phone: 9360 4714. the-carrington.com.au