

DINING OUT

This week's restaurant . . .

Name: Andre's L'Escargot
Address: Brougham St, New Plymouth
Telephone: 84812
Style: French

Seating capacity: 50
Hours: Tues-Sat from 6.30pm, lunches,
 Tues-Fri, 11.30am-2pm
Licence: Full or BYO.

Cosy atmosphere and good food

The menu at New Plymouth's L'Escargot restaurant includes a short history of a particular aspect of dining out in Paris, and for a chuckle, you ought to read it.

It talks about L'Escargot being one of the oldest restaurants in Paris, and the history goes on to say the place changed in character late last century when the Halles market became a popular centre of Parisian night life.

"The smart set thought it very fashionable to eat onion soup off grubby counters in the market at two in the morning," says the New Plymouth menu.

"Here," it continues, "we have tried to create a similar atmosphere. . ."

No way, L'Escargot. You may serve up an onion soup now and again, and at times you may serve it at 2am, but your tables and counters certainly aren't grubby.

Inviting

Quite the opposite, in fact. The Brougham St restaurant has a very smart

bright red exterior that invites diners inside to a cosy, convivial — if cramped — interior.

Andre's

L'ESCARGOT

The place is jam-packed with tables that are covered with red and white check tablecloths. Upstairs there is a small bar that at peak times can also be crowded.

But none of this detracts from the good atmosphere at L'Escargot — in fact it would probably be lost if the restaurant was much larger.

When we visited, on a Tuesday, L'Escargot was brim-full of diners, and this all contributed to a very enjoyable evening out.

For starters, if you have never dined at this restaurant, try the garlic bread — it is the best in New

Plymouth by far.

We excited our taste buds with a loaf which cost \$2.80 and I followed that up with an entree of garlic mussels (a blackboard special \$3.95) while my partner opted for Gazpacho soup (\$3.80).

Gazpacho

This interesting dish is served cold and features tomatoes, green peppers, olives and cucumber. It has quite a bite to it.

My partner then chose escalope of veal in sherry and cream sauce for her main dish (\$14.95).

The meal was rich and filling. A side dish of sauted mushrooms (\$3.80) added to its enjoyment.

But if my partner's main course was filling, you should have seen mine.

Large

Called chicken sauted marengo, and costing \$19.50, it was described as

half a chicken sauted with tomatoes, olives, white wine, flamed with brandy and served with crayfish.

When the waitress brought out the pan containing this dish, it was obvious there was far more than half a chicken involved.

I ate the crayfish and three chicken pieces, and was forced to take the four — yes four — remaining pieces home to be eaten the next day.

It really was a superb dish, far too big for me to consider anything other than a coffee afterwards.

However my partner enjoyed an apricot mousse (\$4.50), and a coffee as well.

We ordered a Nobilos Muller-Thurgau at \$12.50 to accompany the meal, which brought the total cost of the evening to \$67.70.

—R.M

DINING OUT

T.H. 14/11/85

This week's restaurant . . .

Name: L'Escargot.
Address: Brougham St, New Plymouth.
Telephone: 84812.
Style: Friendly a la carte, vegetarian meals on request.

Seating Capacity: 50.
Hours: Lunch, 11am to 2pm; dinner, 6.30pm till late, Tuesday through Saturday.
Licence: Full plus BYO.

Of escargots a la Bourguignonne. . .

Restaurateur Andre Teissonniere is something of an enfant terrible.

He thinks nothing of closing his L'Escargot and quitting New Plymouth for the livelier life of France.

Andre, just back from his second working holiday in two years, says he still manages to retain his customers.

"They are excellent . . . so loyal."

But maybe the Gallic lure is fading for Andre maintains he is fast developing into a real Kiwi.

Certainly he's no stranger to New Zealand after seven years of satisfying Taranaki palates — 4½ of them in Devon St and the last 2½ in Brougham St.

The 110-year-old building is redolent of Andre's homeland and certainly achieves his aim of intimacy.

Reputation

Inevitably the menu has the touch of a chef trainer in France, and its onion soup has something of a reputation among gastronomes. So has the garlic bread but don't be the only one to crunch it if you want to stay popular.

In tribute to L'Escargot I had snails (\$6.95) served in an intriguing brown earthenware bowl with six snail-size holes. Inevitably there was a garlic sauce, which revived my palate and memories of the last time I ate snails — in Mexico's city of fountains and roses, Guadalajara.

Choice

From the blackboard menu which changes weekly my partner chose



avocado full of crabmeat and good value at \$6.80.

The garlic bread compliment to both entrees cost \$2.80.

We resisted the onion soup — \$4.50 per person for a minimum of two — and lingered happily over the selection of mains.

Lapin chasseur (rabbit to the Kiwi) at \$13.80 had been cooked slowly in mushroom, tomatoes, garlic and a white wine sauce, and justified its ranking as a speciality of the house. The veal, a blackboard listing, also cost \$13.80. Its taste was as delicate as its whiteness.

All the main dishes come with french fries and a satisfying side salad.

Not quite replete, we had pineapple and kirsch (\$4.50) and a cheese board (\$5.95) to top off. The latter's three varieties of cheese came in over generous proportions but made good eating. It's a pity not all of a cheese province's restaurants feature this digestion-soother on their menus.

L'Escargot offers the happy choice of BYO or its own well-stocked cellar. My partner provided the former, a velvet-smooth Cabernet 1972, but we could have sampled a wine list offering New Zealand, Australian, German and French ranging in price from \$11.50 to \$35.50.

Our pre-dinner sherries (dry, of course) were \$2 a glass.

We dined at the early hour of 7pm and when we left L'Escargot was a little too crowded. But for a most reasonable \$58.60 it had been a tres bon nuit. —JML

at W C e l e N