

Savour the taste of life

Take time to stop and smell the roses ... and enjoy simply fine food with good company in this laid-back little corner of Paddington

WENDY HUGHES

I've taken a duster to the blackboard of life and deleted the b-word, the one on everyone's lips at this time of year, including my own until quite recently. I'm so done with "busy".

I've gone back to morning walks that I'd thought I never had time for. And yoga and long lingering lunches with friends. Because we all have time to eat.

Pavarotti said it well: "One of the very nicest things about life is that we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and turn our attention to eating."

Lucky, I realise, we are in a part of the world where this is still a pleasurable and accessible pursuit for most of us.

As those who have the absolute pleasure of cooking regularly for others might know, time in the kitchen is a great escape from the "busy" world outside, just as eating in good company is also.

I was reminded of all this recently while catching up with an old pal over lunch at Paddington's new **Darling & Co.** It's a super nice laid-back but chic space in which to indulge in a lunchtime talkfest.

We sit with views of parrot-spangled banquettes and fabulous oversized pink-fringed lighting suspended from the ceiling, natural light streaming in through the timber-toned bar area and windows out to the street.

Head chef Giuliano Melluso's menu offers up food that is approachable without being predictable,

and not the kind of food that you have to think too hard about. A plate of summer vegetables (\$16) is rock-star pretty with beets and beans and broccolini embedded in lashings of labna, all strewn with petals and elderflower and tiny baby herbal foliage.

Loving that botanical lean.

Also good to see on the small plates list is the heavenly Vanella burrata (\$19) served with tomato, bread and salsa verde – the perfect light lunch with a glass of something cold.

Crispy skinned Cone Bay barramundi (\$34) is a simple joy, with clams and baby peas and fennel and a surprisingly light butter sauce.

My friend's linguini (\$28) with Mooloolaba prawns, baby squid, zucchini and tomato is equally simple and stunning.

We sip wine from the nice eclectic little list and talk about our kids and how b--- life gets and I am reminded of the importance of taking time out to do exactly this – talk, listen, eat, relax.

It's what life is actually all about.

Darling & Co, on the former IceWorks site, is open daily from 6.30am-late.

The light, healthy and carefully sourced offerings include Crust & Co sourdough on the breakfast menu, topped with sauteed forest mushrooms and more of that wickedly tantalising labna as backdrop.

There's a pretty green breakfast number too, a "green bowl" of kale and wild rice with haloumi and a soft-boiled egg rolled in herbs.

Get that into your laidback, relaxed and fabulously time-managed schedule.

Darling & Co has just introduced a "ladies lunch" special of two courses and a glass of wine for \$38, available Monday through to Thursday.

And there's a chance for one last lunchtime hurrah of the year with a New Year's Eve lunch comprising three courses and drinks for \$149 (or \$99 without wine and beer), 1pm-4pm.

A chance perhaps to catch up and set a few resolutions for a less busy 2016.

DARLING & CO
157 Given Tce, Paddington
Ph 3367 9800
Open Daily 6.30am-late