



29 JUN, 2024

## GOOD TASTE WITHOUT HIGH PRICES

Herald Sun, Melbourne

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# GOOD TASTE – WITHOUT HIGH PRICES

You can enjoy fine dining  
without breaking the bank

### Andrew Koubaridis

It's boujee on a budget.

Australians wanting a fine dining experience no longer need bulging wallets, with some of the best restaurants in town offering ridiculously-cheap, cost-of-living specials.

Three course meals can be found for the once-equivalent price of a main meal – \$59 – while two-course lunches are going for as little as \$40.

The hospitality sector has long been doing it tough, with recent insolvency data showing one in nine businesses fail.

Delicious digital editor Erina Starkey said this proactive strike – to head off a slump in patronage – was a win for customers in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide.

“There’s some fantastic like set menus for, \$69, \$59 – it’s quite amazing considering it wasn’t that long ago that you couldn’t go out for under \$250,” Ms Starkey said.

“These value-friendly options mean that diners can still

enjoy a special night out without worrying about breaking the budget [and] they’re helping restaurants to attract and retain customers during what continues to be very challenging times.”

She said a well-thought-out set menu can mean less food going to waste in the kitchen, while being more efficient to prepare.

“It’s a win for everyone,” she said.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows people spent 4.2 per cent more on meals out and takeaway food in the 12 months to May as food prices surged 3.3 per cent over the same period.

Jane Restaurant creative director Tristan Rosier recently introduced a \$60 set lunch menu at Sydney’s Surry Hills.

“We definitely are shaping our offering to suit people’s budgets,” he said.

Mr Rosier said customers told him they were saving up or going without other luxuries to enjoy a restaurant meal.

“From our perspective as restaurateurs, we’re seeing expectations because of that never been higher for the experience ... because it’s their one helping for that fortnight or for that month,” he said.

“So we’re trying to really tailor our service – it has to be higher than ever to meet these people’s expectations and surpass them.

“If you can put together a really good offering at a good price point then people can still come out and maybe enjoy them more often than maybe they thought, because they’re spending less than they thought.”

The Restaurant and Catering Association, which represents more than 57,000 restaurants, cafes and catering businesses across Australia, said deals were here to stay.

“What I do is encourage people to obviously look out for those deals, and take advantage of those deals while they are there,” RCA chief executive Suresh Manickam said.

He said, like its customers,



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the hospitality industry was battling its own cost pressures, including energy and rent rises.

“There’s no two ways about that, it’s having a flow-on effect. So obviously, the cost of dining (is increasing). But we get that ... People’s preferences also change. They may not be having a three-course meal, they might just have a simple plate,” he said. “There’s nothing wrong with that.”



### On the menu

#### RUMI, MELBOURNE

##### RUMI CLASSIC \$65

- Pickled vegetables, Sigara Boregi, Labne
- Almond Tarator, Flatbread, Crudités
- Persian meatballs and Cabbage Salad
- Fried Cauliflower
- Lamb shoulder + BBQ Chicken wings with Freekeh salad + Cos and herb salad
- Turkish delight