

hot spots Bearfoot Bistro, British Columbia

Who says what? *Zagat Survey, The Times, Wine Spectator, Cigar Aficionado, American Wine Society Journal, Bon Appétit* and the *Chicago Tribune* try to outdo each other with accolades for this Canadian dining institution, in Whistler, British Columbia.

What do we say? Truly inspiring – from waiter Rory's martini trolley, which parks tableside to start the proceedings, to the theatrical French counting of "une, deux, trois" by the staff as they reveal your meal from under its silver dome, setting the aromas free. Who said North American dining wasn't fine?

Executive chef Melissa Craig's yellowfish tartar, seaweed-crust loin and blood-orange caviar deserves a Michelin star all to itself. Follow it up with tamari-marinated black cod with British Columbia spot prawns, then a duck confit and white-bean pancetta butternut squash ragout and fresh perigord truffles. We sample the Michel Cluizel chocolate trio, which goes straight to our thighs, before Rory returns with another trolley. His

riveting rendition of fromage history is topped only by the revelation this cheese connoisseur is lactose intolerant.

Highlights? Sommelier "Captain Kirk", down in the wine cellar with his sabre. There is something potent about slicing off one's bubbly bottle top with a razor-sharp sword. His wine list is just as impressive: a thick tome of biblical proportions and perhaps the best in Canada. In 2004, Bearfoot Bistro fell victim to a C\$200,000 (HK\$1.4 million) wine heist by burglars whose bosses had refined taste buds. Vintage bottles of signed Mouton Rothschild and the like were whisked away after wires to security cameras were cut. Word is that the culprit was a wine collector of significant clout.

Bet it's expensive. You win that bet. The three-course menu, at a basic C\$90, is good value considering the quality of fare, but start adding wine – and you will – and we're talking C\$180 a head, minimum. Five courses will set you back C\$125 for the food and another C\$120 for matching wines. But blow the budget and go straight for



the eight-course decadence of the Gastronomique menu, at C\$225 a person ... for food alone. Call ahead, because 24 hours' notice is required.

What do we do now? Mortgage the house, book a flight to Vancouver and head for the hills of Whistler, British Columbia. See www.bearfootbistro.com or call 604 932 3433 for more information.

Rachael Oakes-Ash

spree Manly, Sydney

In recent years, Sydney seaside suburb Manly has graduated from beachwear and bikini stores to an assortment of outlets selling funky clothing, designer homeware and art. One of the best things about splurging in Manly is that most shops are within walking distance of each other; and as you pop in and out of stores you're rewarded with enticing views of Manly Beach on one side of town and Sydney Harbour on the other.

The Corso is the pedestrian shopping strip that runs from the ferry terminal on the harbour side to Manly Beach. Beachwear shops that stock popular brands such as Billabong, Quiksilver, Roxy, Rusty and Mambo sit side by side with chic designer shoe stores such as **Blush** (shop 5A, The Corso, tel: 612 9977 6479). Pick up a pair of elegant Sarah Coles evening shoes for A\$120 (HK\$700).

Pop into **Braintree Hemp** (shop 2, The Corso, tel: 612 9977 0955; www.braintreehemp.com), an environmental clothing shop that has racks of casual clothes made from hemp. Its jumpers (A\$20), tops (from A\$20) and men's shirts (from A\$30) are tagged with warnings that, although marijuana and hemp are derived from the same plant, smoking hemp clothing will not have the desired effect. Farther down the street, **Ozbiz Aboriginal Art & Craft** (shop 35, The Corso, tel: 612 9977 3677) is the place to go for didgeridoos made by Aboriginal craftsmen (from A\$175 to A\$1,000), as well as timber jewellery boxes, boomerangs and other genuine indigenous craft items.

One of Manly's finest design stores, **Nordic Fusion** (below left; 2 Wentworth Street, tel: 612 9976 6033; www.nordicfusion.com.au) stocks nothing but products conceived by Scandinavia's leading homeware, jewellery, fabric and furniture designers. The store, which includes an art gallery, is the creation of Sydneysiders Camilla Bowhill and Gry Hedberg, who grew up in Norway and Sweden. Rows of colourful Ilse Jacobsen rubber boots (A\$199), the latest Nordic essential, form a display in one corner. Pick up a Marimekko jumper (A\$99), a Georg Jensen wave box (A\$165), an Aalto vase (from A\$94 to A\$192) or some super Swedish fabric.

D30 (below right; shop 5, 11 Wentworth Street, tel: 612 8966 9744) is the home of glamorous clothes, shoes and a display of handbags that hangs from the handlebars of a motorcycle parked in the centre of

the shop. **Mint Shop** (shop 8, 9 Central Avenue, tel: 612 9976 6488) is a popular hang-out for the style savvy who know the value of clothes designed by Australian fashion figures such as Alice McCall, Sass & Bide, Kate Hurst and Jesus Rodriguez. A Kate Hurst gingham-print dress will set you back A\$286.

Glamourpuss (58 Darley Road, tel: 612 9977 5826; www.glamourpuss.com.au) is a top-quality handbag and fashion shop and label inspired by the designs of the 1950s. Pick up a Marilyn Monroe purse (A\$135) in red, green, black or white, or perhaps a Bringing Up Baby Bag (A\$180), complete with food and bottle coolers, nappy pouch and padded change mat. Nor should pampered pets miss out: the cute Undercover Agent Pooch Carrier (A\$175) is exactly what you need to take your designer poodle shopping. *Christina Pfeiffer*



Christina Pfeiffer



pack it

A friend recently fished her unconscious three-year-old daughter from their swimming pool, which was supposedly protected

by a fence. Someone had carelessly left the safety gate open and the child had wandered in. Luckily she survived, but the memory of their child floating face down in the water will haunt her parents for years.

Safety products can never be substitutes for adult supervision, but most parents know it is difficult to keep an eye on children all the time. A young child can drown quickly, often without any splashing or noise.

Shocked by the relatively high numbers of child drownings in North America (in the United States, nearly 400 children under five drown in family-owned pools each year, with 3,000 treated in hospital), Canadian inventor Bob Lyons created the award-winning Safety Turtle. This easy-to-use alarm consists of an AC-powered base station and a wristband with a watch-like turtle. Light and comfortable to wear, it has a childproof lock and is rugged enough to withstand boisterous play.

The Safety Turtle activates an extremely loud alarm at the base station as soon as it comes into contact with water (although rain and lawn sprinklers will not set it off). The alarm continues until reset. The system is available in standard and commercial/extended-range versions to suit different locations. Longer wristbands are available to fit adults who may benefit from extra safety measures, such as the disabled or senior citizens. The "turtle" is even suitable for pets, thanks to a special adaptor that attaches it to a collar.

The alarm system is light enough to pack in hand luggage, making it ideal for travel. A battery-pack travel version is also available for locations without electrical power – the seaside, perhaps. Available in six colours and with no limit to the number of turtles that may be used with one base station, the product might even find its way onto school trips.

The base station is guaranteed for 12 months and the wristband has a six-month warranty. The base station costs C\$165 (HK\$1,150), the wristband C\$77 and the battery pack-travel model C\$135. All are available online at www.safetyturtle.com; the company will deliver to Hong Kong with the correct AC adaptor. *Catherine Shaw*

