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Discover culinary class at Balis new fine diners

Beef carpaccio with palm heart salad and sesame grissini. Snapper ceviche with aji amarillo dressing.

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Lobster thermidor and classic, made-at-the-table Caesar salad.

Sounds like the offerings of an upmarket restaurant in Sydney, San Francisco or Seville but these dishes are on menus in Bali.

Who would have thought?

No longer the domain of nasi goreng and satay sticks, the tropical holiday island is striving to making a name for itself as a dining destination and attract fine food-loving, fivestar tourists in the process.

Spearheading Bali's wave of luxury accommodation and top-notch cuisine is Balinese businessman Kadek Wiranatha, who owns upmarket outlets along the tourist strip including the Ku De Ta beachfront precinct, which houses degustation diner Mejekawi, and recently revamped fusion restaurant Chez Gado Gado.

"Seminyak has become known for its food and drink offerings and has actually become a destination for travellers from around the world looking for stand-out food and luxury offerings," he says. "I think this has become very apparent in the past five years." Kadek's newest venue is the six-star beachfront retreat Double-Six Luxury Hotel at Seminyak, next to Bali's throbbing tourism hotspots of Kuta and Legian.

It's a sophisticated 146-suite hotel with an in-house day spa, 120-metre infinity pool, personalised butler service and staff dressed in bespoke uniforms designed by Indonesian haute couture designer Chossy Latu.

But the biggest drawcard at Double-Six is the food and **wine** venues, all five of which are operated by Sydney chef Robert Marchetti, who recently **sold** his restaurant, North Bondi Italian, and opened Seminyak Italian Food at this new retreat.

Seminyak Italian is the main restaurant in the hotel, overlooking the pool and a row of thatch-roof bars and warungs that line the Double-Six beachfront.

The trattoria offers night-time diners a generous choice of offerings, from smallgoods and bruschetta to pasta, risotto and traditional dishes such as cotoletta Milanese and porchetta di marchegiano. The **wine** list is similarly thorough, listing Piedmont Nebbiolo, New South Wales' Monocle Shiraz and pinot grigio from Friuli in Italy.

Daytime and in-room menus are influenced by healthy options like fresh juices, smoothies and a focus on local, seasonal produce.

But the jewel in Robert's crown at Double-Six is the 170sq m rooftop entertainment area.

Rooftop guests can book floating booths on a deck that sits 15m above sea level and offers ocean views. Inside, the chefs theatrically cook satays over open flames in a central island.

When it's fully operational by the end of October, DoubleSix Rooftop will have a floor-to-ceiling aquarium filled with sharks and exotic fish and a mini-cinema where guests can pull up a deck chair, order a cocktail or some snacks and catch the latest award-winning short film.

Down one level will be The Plantation Grill, boasting black marble finishes, a vaulted double-height ceiling, huge windows looking out to sea and a reception desk designed to look like a giant Louis Vuitton suitcase.

It will specialise in dry-aged meat and line-caught seafood, cooked in specially made wood-fired ovens. Next door will be the Sling Bar, an equally theatrical venue serving prohibition-style cocktails and decked out with green velvet couches offering wide ocean views.

Robert says this is what tourists now demand.

"People travel so much more. They expect personalised and customised service." And he isn't the only Australian to identify this new market in Bali. Will Meyrick, formerly of Sydney's Longrain restaurant, opened Sarong in Bali in 2008 and followed it up with Mama San last year. A combination of Chinese, Indian, Malaysian and other Asian cuisines, Mama San mirrors 1920s colonial Shanghai with mahjong tables and chesterfield lounges.

Meanwhile, Sydney caterer Adam Dundas Taylor moved with his wife and baby a year ago to start up Barbacoa, an upmarket Latin American-inspired restaurant making a name for its smoky, wood-fired flavours.

"It's been tough," Adam says. "But we've built the business up gradually which is the right way to do it. It's going really well now." The writer travelled as a guest of Double-Six Luxury Hotel, Seminyak. Suites start from \$450 a night. Garuda flies daily from Brisbane to Bali direct.

double-six.com

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