

Divine inspiration



Any meal at Bridges is one that will go down the memory, but prefacing it with wine tasting creates an experience to be treasured

Essential Bali is a sucker for infectious enthusiasm allied with expertise. It's something we aspire to in our writing and magazine production and something we recognised in Antoine Olivain, the sommelier at Bridges restaurant and Divine wine bar. Any day is a good day at Bridges, with Divine Hours its version of happy hour between 4-7pm every day. But if you can fit it in your schedule, we recommend you pay a visit on a Divine Friday.

The concept is simple, but rather brilliant for any wine lover. Every week there is a theme and Antoine selects five wines

really want to get under the wineskin then we highly recommend journeying into the cosy recess of the Divine wineshop. Here you will benefit from the knowledge and enthusiasm of the resident wine expert who talks through the background behind that week's theme and each wine, which are individually matched to canapés. Witty and engaging, Antoine takes you a grape journey that is as entertaining as it is informative.

But it's not just the wine that will keep you coming back to Bridges, although it's enough in itself. The surroundings have evolved with the village of Ubud over many years, firstly as Bridges Café and more recently as a fine dining restaurant. Situated just across the bridge (where else?) from the centre of Ubud, a kilometre from the palace, the building has several levels offering a multi-layered ambience. It is to one of the lower levels containing the main restaurant that we descend, our appetites well and truly whetted with wine and knowledge, to take our place for dinner. Below street level, the balcony setting looks over the river but is mainly a vista of palm trees and other lush, green foliage.

Bridges classes itself as casual fine dining and it's a concept that fits Bali like a hand in a glove; excellent food and exemplary service in a laidback setting. Bravo. ■

on that theme. You can choose to taste one, three or five of those wines while relaxing in the outside terrace with some live music in the background. But if you



"Well worth a visit, the view from the bridge is stunning and the food is superb. The knowledge and passion of the sommelier took the evening to another level."
Richard Gill, *Essential Bali* guest reviewer



Whet your appetite

As you've probably worked out by now, if you like wine this is a good place to go. But it's not all about the liquid; the food is excellent, too. The menu is select and mouthwatering and decision-making was far from easy. Our group gorged on a variety of starters including a wonderful foie gras, seared lamb and eggplant dumplings. The favoured main was the Bridges special twice-cooked duck breast lightly dressed with five-spiced soy sauce. The quality didn't come as a surprise but the volume did with an unexpectedly generous portion. Chocolate espresso lava cake was a twist on a perennial *Essential Bali* favourite and there was just time, and just room, to fit a cheese selection complete with nut and apple toast, sliced fruits, toasted mixed nuts, date purée and vanilla-infused honey. ■



1. On several levels: Bridges is a multi-layered culinary arena

2. Seafood diet: The delightful cured-lemon octopus salad

3. Under the bridge: Tables have a wonderful view of the riverbank

essentialtasting



- www.bridgesbali.com
- International
- Jl. Campuhan (next to Museum Antonio Blanco), Ubud
- +62 (0) 361 970 095
- contact@bridgesbali.com
- Main: 110,000 - 260,000 Rp ++
- Bottle of wine: 400,000 - 14,000,000 Rp ++
- Bottle of Bintang: 30,000 Rp ++

The Verdict

If you can't fit in dinner, try the wine. If you can't fit in wine tasting, try the dinner. If you've got any sense and enough time you'll combine both for a great culinary experience in a relaxed setting at reasonable prices. Fine dining, fine wine, fine setting... fine time.

