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To stop bacon curling up during cooking, remove the rind and cut small incisions along the edge.

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APPETITE FOR PARIS

CLASSIC FRENCH FLAVOURS ON OUR DOORSTEP

Beverley Hudec

SIPPING an apertif on a balmy afternoon, it's easy to slip into holiday mode.

It's the done thing in a Parisian bistro, or at a café on the Cote d'Azur. Sadly we're not, although Palmie's not a bad substitute.

We're doing Sunday lunch at Bistro Rivage. The bistro is head chef and owner Tom Rutherford's latest passion.

Last year, Rutherford had one of those seminal moments.

"Mon dieu" thought the Kiwi, who's cooked in London with Albert Roux, "what am I doing?"

Rutherford decided to do what he loves best and that's cooking classic French cuisine. After all he's been schooled by one of the greats at La Gavroche, the UK's first three-starred Michelin restaurant.

Inspired, the francophile closed Beach Road, his Palm Beach restaurant of nine years and reopened as Bistro Rivage.

Laidback lunch on the deck kicks off with live music, a bowl of warm pistachios and dish

BISTRO RIVAGE

Where: 1 Beach Rd, Palm Beach

Phone: 9974 1159

Open: Friday to Monday, lunch and dinner from noon until late

Talking point: Tarte tatin, \$16.50

Vibe: Where are the Gauloises?

of warm olives and whole chillies glistening in olive oil, and of course, and endless supply of French bread and butter.

The entree arrives. We choose to share the assiette de charcuterie, a plate laden with a slice of warm pork belly topped with crunchy crackling, super-rich chicken liver parfait, prosciutto and rabbit rilette.

The pickled baby beets, gherkins and artichokes cut through all the richness.

There's more than enough goodies for two to pile onto the thickly sliced and toasted sourdough.

It's so easy to scoff the lot, the trick is saying "non".

After much umming and ah-ing, we go for two classic main

courses – duck confit and the house special, coq au vin.

Rutherford cooks extra large roosters for this classic casserole.

They're marinated in red wine and thyme for two days before being slow-cooked with stock, baby mushrooms, shallots, house-cured bacon and carrots. Boiled kipfler potatoes sprinkled with parsley alone carry the flavours.

The twice-cooked duck has a wintry accompaniment – creamy fondant brussels sprouts and comes with a mustard sauce to reign in the richness.

Do save some room for that French classic dessert, tarte Tatin.

It's incredible how three simple ingredients tucked snugly under puff pastry can taste so delicious.

Rutherford cooks the caramelised wedge of granny smiths, sugar and butter so it collapses and leaves it overnight so it can be cut in thick slices.

It's dusted with icing sugar and plated up with blueberries, a fleur de lys tuile and vanilla ice-cream.

Feeling virtuous, I forego the ice-cream... everything in moderation.



Bistro Rivage's classic dessert tarte Tatin (above). The restaurant's casual interior (below left) and owner and head chef Tom Rutherford (below right).

