



# GOLDEN GATE

Chinese tradition meets classic Aussie pub style at Ricky & Pinky on the wining and dining strip of Melbourne's Fitzroy.

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MENU



This page, from top left Ricky & Pinky chef Andrew McConnell. Origami light boxes by Melbourne designers Tin & Ed. The morning's catch in the blue-lit tank. Entry to the jade room. Opposite page The gold tubing arches hark back to the intricate design of traditional Chinese 'gateways'.

The wisdom tucked inside my golf-ball-sized fortune cookie is insightful: "Your ability to find the silly in the serious will take you far." It's a telling aphorism and one that has been a recipe for its maker's success. Chinese restaurant Ricky & Pinky is the latest culinary venture from Melbourne chef Andrew McConnell, who contrasts the refined food offering with a lighthearted atmosphere. "We don't take ourselves too seriously," says Andrew who has named the eatery after the legendary tattoo parlour in his old stomping ground of Hong Kong where he first got inked.

Ricky & Pinky takes the place of Moon Under Water, Andrew's fine dining establishment at the rear of the heritage Builders Arms Hotel. "I considered new premises entirely, but I like the contrast of a Chinese restaurant dropped into a classic old Australian pub. The bar wasn't broken, it's still a great space. They weren't designed to compete with one another," he says. The challenge for designers Sibling Architecture was to create a new rear environment while keeping the original pub space intact. "We looked to the use of gateways and archways in traditional Chinese gardens as a way to create thresholds between different spaces, as well as repetition and motifs that suggested infinity. We referenced jade and gold in a playful way," says Amelia Borg, director of Sibling Architecture.

More joy comes by way of mascot motifs Ricky and Pinky, two gold and glutinous mischievous Chinese characters imprinted on the restaurant graphics. Imagined by Studio Round, the "two little piggies are our take on traditional Chinese lucky cats," says senior design manager Bianca Lazzaro. "They have their place in the restaurant to help and guide people through the menu, offering tips on favourite dishes."

Yet there's nothing funny about the food. It's quintessential McConnell: quality produce prepared simply with a considered edge. There's traditional dishes such as smashed cucumber, drunken chicken and mapo tofu, with two dedicated dumpling chefs making them all day, every day.

"There are some modern elements like produce and techniques and in the way we interpret some of the dishes," says Andrew. "The identity embraces Chinese customs and traditions and is playful in its approach to encapsulate the bustling energy of an authentic Chinese restaurant. Underpinned with a level of sophistication, it balances kitsch with tradition," says Bianca.

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belle 2017



This page, from top left Fried prawn and chicken wontons. The iconic Kikkoman bottle alongside ceramics from Cibi and kitsch panda jars. Gold tubing marks the juncture of the blue and jade rooms. Thonet 'No 18' Bentwood chairs encircle traditional Chinese tablesettings.

## FRIED PRAWN & CHICKEN WONTONS, SWEET & SOUR SAUCE

MAKES 20 DUMPLINGS

### WONTONS

250g medium green prawns, peeled and deveined  
 1 teaspoon egg white  
 ½ teaspoon tapioca starch  
 ¼ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda  
 ½ teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon grapeseed oil  
 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic chives  
 250g chicken mince  
 ¼ teaspoon sesame oil  
 Pinch of sugar  
 ¼ teaspoon fish sauce  
 1½ teaspoons soy sauce  
 Pinch of ground white pepper  
 20 yellow wonton wrappers  
 Oil, for deep frying

### SWEET & SOUR SAUCE

1 tablespoon grapeseed oil  
 2 onions, thinly sliced  
 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
 125ml (½ cup) tomato ketchup  
 60ml (¼ cup) white wine vinegar  
 75g (⅓ cup) white sugar  
 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce  
 250ml (1 cup) water  
 ½ teaspoon salt

1 To make the sweet and sour sauce, heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and cook, stirring, for 3-4 minutes or until softened. Add tomato ketchup, vinegar, sugar, Worcestershire sauce, water and salt and bring to the boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer for

5 minutes. Strain through a fine sieve, discard solids. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside at room temperature.

2 To make dumplings, combine prawns, egg white, tapioca, bicarbonate of soda and salt in a small bowl. Cover and marinate in fridge for 1 hour.

3 Heat oil in a small saucepan, add garlic chives and cook, stirring, for 1 minute or until fragrant. Transfer chives to a small bowl. Set aside to cool.

4 Remove prawns from fridge, coarsely dice one-third and set aside. Finely chop remaining prawns to a mince. Place prawn and chicken mince in a large bowl and combine by repeatedly throwing mixture against side of bowl until sticky and cohesive. This process strengthens the protein to give a firmer texture. Add diced prawns, garlic chives, sesame oil, sugar, fish sauce, soy sauce and pepper. Mix until well combined.

5 Lay wonton wrappers out on a clean work surface. Place a rounded teaspoon of mixture in the middle of each wrapper. Brush edges of wonton wrapper with a little cold water. Fold wrapper in half towards you to enclose filling and form a triangle shape.

6 Heat enough oil in a deep fryer or in a large deep saucepan to come halfway up sides of fryer/saucepan. Heat to 170°C using a thermometer or alternatively until a cube of bread turns golden brown in 20 seconds. Add wontons, in batches, and cook for 2 minutes or until golden and crisp. Serve with sweet and sour sauce.

## PIPIS, XO SAUCE, FRIED BREAD

SERVES 4

3 sticks Chinese fried bread (Chinese doughnuts)  
 2kg pipis or clams (vongole), rinsed thoroughly, drained  
 60ml (¼ cup) XO sauce (see recipe below)  
 2 teaspoons lemon juice

### XO SAUCE

MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP (180ML)

12g dried scallops  
 32g dried shrimp  
 60ml (¼ cup) vegetable oil  
 2 large Asian shallots, thinly sliced  
 7 cloves garlic, thinly sliced  
 25g jamón or prosciutto, finely chopped  
 3 fresh long red chillies, seeded, finely chopped  
 3 dried long red chillies, seeded, soaked in hot water for 30 minutes, finely chopped  
 5 dried birdseye chillies, finely chopped  
 ½ teaspoon roasted shrimp paste  
 1½ teaspoons white sugar, or to taste

1 To make the XO sauce, place scallops and shrimp in 2 separate bowls. Add 125ml (½ cup) boiling water to each. Set aside to soak for 1 hour or until plump. Drain each, reserving soaking liquid. Tear drained scallops into fine shreds, pat dry on paper towels. Finely chop shrimp and set aside.

2 Heat oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add shallots and garlic and cook, stirring, for 3 minutes or until golden. Add reserved scallops and shrimp and cook, stirring, for 4-5 minutes or until golden brown. Add jamón, fresh and dried chillies and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add shrimp paste, sugar and reserved scallop and shrimp soaking water and bring to the boil.

3 Reduce heat to low and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 10-15 minutes or until sauce is fragrant and water has evaporated. Remove from the heat and strain, reserving any oil. Transfer solids to

a sterilised jar, then pour in enough of the reserved oil to cover. XO sauce will keep refrigerated in a sterilised jar for up to 1 month.

4 When ready to serve, preheat oven to 180°C or 160°C fan forced. Place bread on baking tray and bake for 3 minutes or until crisp. Cut bread into 1cm-thick slices and set aside.

5 Place pipis in a large saucepan or wok with 1-2 tablespoons water and place over a high heat. Cover and cook, checking after 1 minute, stir and replace lid. Repeat process until most of the pipis have opened. Drain pipis and reserve cooking liquid.  
 6 In a separate clean saucepan, heat XO sauce over medium-high heat until aromatic. Add drained pipis and 60ml (¼ cup) reserved cooking liquid and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add lemon juice and adjust seasoning if required. Add bread to pipis and stir until well coated. Transfer to serving bowls, serve immediately.



This page, from top Ricky & Pinky pigs are emblazoned on the waitstaff uniforms. Andrew's favourite dish, Pipsis with XO sauce. The steelwork and retained features in the dining area are a nod to the Art Deco origins of the pub. Light boxes by Tin & Ed. Traditional Chinese motifs are integrated into the menu design.





This page, from top left in the dining area, round tables equipped with lazy Susans are designed for sharing. Giant fortune cookies with Andrew's 'fortunes'. Gold and blue tubing marks the different spaces. Fresh from the restaurant's blue-lit fish tank, steamed whole snapper with coriander and ginger.



## STEAMED WHOLE SNAPPER, CORIANDER & GINGER

SERVES 4

- 1 x 500g whole snapper, gutted, cleaned, scaled
- 50g ginger, peeled, finely julienned
- 3 long green shallots, white part only, finely sliced, green tops reserved
- 1 small bunch coriander, leaves picked, stems and roots reserved
- 1 tablespoon ginger vinegar (recipe below)

### CHINESE BROTH

- 300ml water
- 75ml gluten-free soy sauce
- 75ml shaoxing wine
- 15g reserved long green shallot tops
- 9g ginger, sliced
- 2 dried shitake mushrooms
- 2 star anise
- 2 cloves

### GINGER VINEGAR

- 2 teaspoons grapeseed oil
- 60g prepared coriander root, finely chopped
- 40g ginger, peeled, finely chopped
- 16g rock sugar
- 160ml (⅔ cup) rice wine vinegar

1 To make Chinese broth, place ingredients in medium saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Remove from heat and leave overnight. The next day, strain through a fine sieve. Cover and refrigerate.

2 To make the ginger vinegar, heat oil in small saucepan over medium heat. Add coriander root and ginger and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until soft. Add sugar and vinegar and simmer until liquid evaporates, leaving only coriander and ginger solids.

3 To prepare snapper, pat dry with absorbent paper. Use a sharp knife to make 4 deep diagonal slashes in the flesh on both sides of the fish. Place fish on a plate (that will fit snugly inside a steamer basket) lined with baking paper. Sprinkle with the ginger and shallots, lightly season with salt. Place plate inside steamer basket over a saucepan of simmering water, ensuring base of steamer basket does not touch water. Cover and steam for 10 minutes or until thickest part of fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

4 Meanwhile, place reserved broth in small saucepan and bring to boil. Stir in one tablespoon of ginger vinegar solids.

5 Transfer snapper to a serving plate. Spoon 200ml of the hot broth over the fish, sprinkle with coriander leaves and serve.