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Tukka opens door to an indigenous cuisine

By WENDY HALL

ONE of the first things you notice at West End's Tukka Restaurant is the splendid warmth of the decor, its timber furniture and ochre artworks.

There's a rustic undertone here, but the white tablecloths and pristine glassware hint at the sophisticated gourmet delights that await.

With owner Alistair Roberts' crisp and rather proper English-Australian way with words and head chef Stephane Bremont's mesmerising French accent, ours could be a food discussion anywhere in the world, yet this place somehow feels very close to the heart of Australian cuisine, fitting perfectly with the energetic Roberts' original vision for the restaurant.

It was back in 2002 and he had recently returned to Australia, after spending most of his formative years in the USA and UK.

He had seen a fair slice of the globe by then and realised that, unlike other parts of the world, Australia

still could not really claim a style of cuisine that was purely its own.

"Other countries, like France, had cuisines that were a central part of their culture but we didn't have that here in Australia," he said. "So I set out to establish a new Australian cuisine using native products.

"We wanted to create a new Australian gourmet cuisine, something Australians could be proud of and show to the world."

French-born and trained Bremont has applied his wizardry to the flavours of Australia, to create such specialties as lemon eucalypt-cured crocodile gravalax, grapefruit salad and cream (\$17.50) and emu fillet with passion fruit foam, silver beet and caramelised hazelnuts (\$29.50).

For native food rookies, there's a platter of game meats, native berries, fruits and spices, home-made damper and native dips (18.50).

Tukka, West End: open every evening. Phone 3846 6333.



■ Stephane Bremont

