



## Sunday Night Dinner

Ju-Rin

316 Pacific Highway, Crows Nest  
(02) 9966 5811

Review by **SCOTT BOLLES**

**S**unday night crowds are a lottery. Some restaurants sit empty as their customers stay home and regroup for the week ahead, while others feel like it's still Saturday night. This Japanese eatery was free of Sunday night blues, with the dining room stuffed to full capacity.

The secret is out about Ju-Rin. Since its recent naming as Favourite Asian by *The SMH Good Food Guide*, regulars at this unassuming Pacific Highway eatery know they need to be in early to snare a seat. When we lob, the diner profile is entirely Asian; our arrival the start of a paler, pastier second wave.

There's nothing flash about Ju-Rin, but it's warm in colour and vibe, comfortable and over-serviced for a room of its small size. The design style favours quirky mix 'n' match, with different settings used from table to table and ornamental chopsticks with more notches in them than Kirsty Alley's belt.

If Ju-Rin's prices seem small, it's because dishes are also bonsai in size. It's like ordering a succession of degustation courses. Baby abalone (\$13.50) is pretty in presentation, but the produce is largely left to its own devices – probably best for those seeking an introduction to abalone. Squid and scallop dumplings (\$11) are dripping in class, the textural delights enhanced by a fine noodle-like ridging to the steamed casing. Pork belly "Okinawa style" (\$12.50) is an addictive mix of tender meat and explosive, mellow fat, while sautéed scallop and prawn (\$14.50) wades in a sauce of garlic, lemon and soy offering equal measures of restraint and seduction. The predictable qualities of the prawn tempura roll (\$11.80) almost come as a shock, and the only real flat-liner of the night is a deep-fried spring roll of overbearing creaminess (\$7.80). Everything else is a delight.

**IN A FEW WORDS:** interesting, off-piste Japanese on the lower north shore.

**COME HERE FOR:** A long, rewarding species board.