

# KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

FIONA DONNELLY



Queensland **taste**

**F**reighting a menu that includes the likes of Summerland camel fillet with caramelised humus and burnt onion cream, and binchotan-seared duck livers with miso mayonnaise – it's clear right from takeoff, Apron is not going to be your regular airport hotel restaurant.

The new ground-floor venture at the freshly opened 5-star Pullman Brisbane Airport, Apron, is billed as refined rather than fine dining – but the 90-seater, with its own private dining room and bar, sure boasts some upscale sounding dishes.

Local mud crab congee, for example, comes with a snow of foie gras, lardo and beach karkalla, while house-made angel hair pasta scores Moreton Bay bug and abalone butter, as well as chilli and garlic. Local producers are well represented, too, with Schultz's suckling pig, from a Toowoomba supplier making the cut, plus Casa Motta's burrata, Maleny buffalo quark and more.

Executive chef **Justin Zammit**, formerly executive chef at QT Hotels Gold Coast (pictured), is also head honcho at the associated new 600-pax Brisbane Airport Conference Centre, plus the kitchens at neighbouring newcomer, Ibis Hotel Brisbane Airport.

The 243-room Ibis Hotel features a 160-seat casual alfresco bistro-style eatery called Cribb Island Beach Club with a cafe, and a 100-pax rooftop bar dubbed Sky Lounge, with views to Moreton Bay.

The Cribb Island moniker is a cap-tip to the former Brisbane suburb resumed by government in the 1970s to create extra space for Brisbane Airport.

Cribb Island Beach Club's globetrotting bistro menu leans mainly towards family-friendly fare – think burgers, schnitzels and salads with pizza, pasta, wok and seafood options also hitting the table. The create-your-own sundae is likely to prove a hit with sweet-toothed travellers, featuring toppings ranging from shaved chocolate and brownie crumble to popping candy and fudge.

Both hotels are within trolley pushing distance of the domestic terminal.

## USE YOUR NOODLE

Brisbane's leading ramen master **Taro Akimoto** is firing up a brand new noodle destination – his first to be located south of the river.

If all goes to plan, the city's fourth Taro's Ramen will get hot and steamy on the former site of Socarrat Paella Bar on South Brisbane's Melbourne St in mid-November.

There are two Taro's Ramen shops already in the CBD, at 480 Queen St and on Edward St, plus a third on Ascot's Racecourse Rd.

Akimoto says the South Brisbane 80-seater set up will be similar to his Ascot project, with iPad orders and a good variety of side dishes and drinks. Former Ascot manager, **Ryoichi Kageyama**, will transfer across to the Melbourne St eatery.

The team has imported an automatic Japanese-made gyoza wrapping machine which will be installed at the new digs. This will supply dumplings to Akimoto's other venues, while noodles will continue to be made at Ascot and Queen St.

"At 177sq m it's larger than normal for us," says Akimoto, who plans to reuse much of the existing fitout, adding extra booth seating for comfort.

# SET FOR TAKEOFF



The new Pullman Brisbane Airport restaurant is set to get tongues wagging, serving camel for dinner

## NEW OASIS FOR ELK ESPRESSO

Elk Espresso, one of the Gold Coast's best-loved cafes, will move into a new beach-facing home beneath Oasis Shopping Centre in Broadbeach.

Owner **Andrew Whiting** starts work this week and aims to kick off the 140-seater at the beginning of December. "As soon as I walked in I thought – this is us," says Whiting, who's engaged Brisbane designer Tara Dennis to do the fitout.

"It's just on the outside of the shopping centre – there's no direct access from the centre – but for Gold Coast locals parking is a huge thing and there's thousands of parks here."

Elk regularly has long queues – with 40 minute waits not unknown – and Whiting says he's looking forward to being able to seat around one-third more diners and to putting the new larger kitchen to good use. He also plans to reintroduce functions.

"It will still be Elk Espresso. Same name, same ethos," says Whiting. "The design will be challenging because we have such an established brand but we've taken some of the design elements, so you'll say – yes, this is still Elk but with different touch points and textures."

## COFFEE KING'S FRESH VENTURE

Min & Co, a new roastery-cafe and eating house springing up in East Brisbane at the base of The Wellington is planning to offer an all-you-can-eat Mediterranean-inspired night-time menu, as well as a more usual daytime a la carte cafe offering.

The project is the handiwork of **Mina Anapo** and Brisbane coffee czar **Phil Di Bella**. Anapo is a former director of market development at Di Bella Coffee and Min & Co is set to open mid-November. The two are 50:50 partners in the venture.

The new 140-seater will offer iPad ordering during the day, while at night servers will bring around a range of offerings – pizza, pasta, risotto, saltimbocca, shanks and more – and diners will be served at table, Yum Cha style.

"Our motto is no one leaves hungry," says Anapo. "Between 10-15 dishes will be served at table."

Chef **Mario Cali** of Locale, Newstead is acting as a menu consultant. Anapo says they're aiming to offer the night-time feast for \$45-\$49.

## HOT PLANS TO BRING IN THE DOUGH

**Craig McCabe** and wife **Maeva**, of Noosa Junction's Noosa Hot Bread Shop, a well-regarded and novel bakery and French bistro, are now working on a fresh project in Cooroy on the Sunshine Coast.

The couple, who also have a patisserie-cafe on Noosa's Hastings St, aim to unveil their as yet unnamed pizzeria-bistro-bakery around mid-December in a 60-year-old character building which once housed Madill's Garage.

"We'll have a wood-fired pizza oven in the back section and the bakery will be to the front, as well as a micro roaster – so we can roast coffee," says McCabe, the founding chef of Woolloongabba's 1889 Enoteca. "We'll have a small deli as well."

The couple is expecting a fourth child around the same time as the Cooroy project opening and McCabe says he plans to engage a new executive chef to look after the group.

## CLUCKING GREAT IDEA

Sydney's hip Mexican-Asian mashup Bad Hombrés is set to take over Alf's Place (formerly Alfredo's Pizzeria) in Fortitude Valley for the month of November, while local pop-up Three Little Pigs Vietnamese Supper Club will spark up on Thursday.

Owner **Damian Griffiths**, currently busy overseeing the opening of the outfit's first Doughnut Time in London, says he's also considering reinventing his mothballed chicken rotisserie concept in Brisbane.

"It won't happen until 2018 but we've imported a rotisserie from the UK," says Griffiths. "It will be called Vic's Birdhouse and it will go underneath Bubbles in the Bathhouse space. Just one dish chicken, chips and salad. So you'll be able to order steak upstairs and chicken downstairs."

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