



Bites

Natascha Mirotsch



THE news from Cloudland, the gargantuan dining venue in Fortitude Valley, is that there is no news. The much-hyped venue was supposed to open in December but that deadline came and went and it now looks like a late February opening. Apparently the hold-up is due to permits and "the changing of finishes", but a Bites spy who's had a sneak peek confirms that it will be worth the wait, as it's truly a spectacular building "like something you'd find in New York", he reckons. According to a Cloudland spokesperson, the venue's mandate is "to offer super-premium food and beverage to a more discerning over-25 clientele".

WONDERING what's become of Jason Peppler, ex chef of Fortitude Valley's Isis? While "considering his options", he's been doing a bit of consulting at Tisane Tearoom in Fortitude Valley, where his fiancée, Renee, is pastry chef. The venue re-opened last week after a month's closure over the festive season, with a new chef, Brett Weedman. While it's always been known for its high tea, Peppler's brief is to stimulate the lunch trade. "I'm just getting them started off with a new menu - very simple, seasonal and lovely." Well-priced menu items include zucchini fritters, house-cured salmon, tomato salsa and dill crème fraiche and homemade gnocchi, mixed tomatoes, basil, black olives, and shaved parmesan. With a dedicated pastry chef on site, the desserts are pretty sweet too, like the delicious-sounding dark chocolate citrus tart, orange cream and citrus toffee.

HE'S certainly not slacking off. Peppler pops up again next Tuesday at the launch of the Queensland chapter of Sommeliers Australia. The idea of a person

dedicated to advising, serving and looking after the wine in a restaurant is more commonplace in southern restaurants, but Sommeliers Australia, a national organisation representing sommeliers and offering training and qualifications, obviously think the time is ripe to make a foray into Queensland. The launch will take place at a lunch hosted by Restaurant Two's sommelier Peter Marchant and Isis' Matt Brook. There'll be three courses presented by Pepler, Restaurant Manx's Paul McGivern and Two's David Pugh, each matched with up to three wines (including at least one Queensland). The cost is \$80 and the lunch (and membership) is open to industry professionals and general wine enthusiasts. Go to www.sommeliers.com.au to book.

GIANNI'S chef Javier Codina has just returned from a holiday to his native Barcelona and while everyone associates Spain these days with the molecular movement, he reckons that there's been a return to a more rustic style of cooking. "Everyone's really embracing home cooking again, cheap cuts, slow roasting, cooking at very low temperatures and sous vide cooking," he says. Having got the other restaurant Gusto at Portside up and running, Codina is back at the newly revamped Gianni's and has big plans. "It's been 10 years and we're not the new kids on the block any more so we need to work at it. Our aim is to push the boundaries with the food and make Gianni's into Queensland best," he says. So what about those renos? It's all looking pretty schmick with a new bar, lighting and an extra lavatory being put in.

ARE there any old-style pubs left in Brisbane? The Exchange Hotel is the latest to have been glammed up, and by no less than architectural firm Brand+Slater. It now features four bars and an open-air, rooftop terrace as well as a dining room, bistro food

and a bar menu. In black and chrome with custom-designed furniture, it's obviously aiming at a more corporate crowd than the skint students it once attracted.

CONTINUING the trend for cafes to get serious about coffee is the very schmick-looking Cartell Coffee, operating out of the old milk bar site in Caxton St for the past few weeks. At the moment, it's a boutique hole-in-the-wall cafe, but manager Quentin Sauer says they're petitioning council to allow them to level the footpath outside to provide extra dining space. Currently they're doing light breakfasts and lunches, and they've put in an application for a liquor licence but their aim is to concentrate on coffee, which is Di Gabrielle, the house blend Vivace, described as "full-bodied, dark and brooding" made on a La Mazzo machine and served in small cups. "We want people to really be able to taste the coffee rather than just milk," Sauer says.

FROMAGE fans can follow their noses to Black Pearl Epicure in Fortitude Valley later this month. On Thursday, February 26, they'll find Will Studd, doyen of all things dairy, taking a demonstration class on his favourite subject, cheese.

Anyone who's been lucky enough to leaf through Studd's authoritative *Cheese Slices* book, or enjoyed an episode of his *Cheese Slices* series on TV, will be keen to hear what the big fromage has to say on selecting, storing and eating everything from brie to gruyere and beyond. It's not a cheap session, at a cost of \$130, but if you're passionate about your curds and whey and keen to know more, Studd's your man.

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 Fiona Donnelly is on leave.