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Page 1 of 2

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

FIONA
DONNELLY



The team at Brisbane glamour spot Black Bird Bar & Grill, has been busy feathering its plush riverfront nest. On April 27, the Ghanem Group owners plan to unveil Black Bird Private Dining & Events, a massive downstairs function and private dining venue at the Riverside Centre, Eagle St, catering for up to 400, with some of the city's finest river vistas from the Story Bridge to Kangaroo Point cliffs.

Housed in the former home of short-lived Chinese eatery Imperial Seafood Restaurant, the new space sits beneath Black Bird and will have its own kitchen brigade headed by **Lyndon Tyres**, a former head chef at Melbourne's Circa, The Prince at St Kilda.

Director **Nehme Ghanem** says the space will be anything but a typical function centre.

"We're keeping the main room simple to allow people to dress it up, but it will have handmade carpet and good-quality furniture.

"It has the same 180-degree views to the Story Bridge as Black Bird, but the space is cantilevered out over the water."

The venue's new kitchen even has a version of the massive Grillworks Inferno, which had to be craned in upstairs. Executive chef **Jake Nicolson** says the set-up will give wedding parties and function guests flexibility.

"It's been built to execute sit-down weddings for 200, where guests can choose their menu on the night," Nicolson says. "The wood-fired grill will mean great steaks, fish – all the same flavours as up here (at Black Bird Bar & Grill).

"It's about customising the experience and guests getting a unique experience and choice."

The Ghanems will be able to flip the venue, if required – seating restaurant diners downstairs or creating a space that can hold 600-700 guests.

DETOUR ON COURSE

Fancy a detour to Woolloongabba?

Well-regarded head chef **Damon Amos**, formerly of Brisbane city restaurant Public, certainly hopes so. He plans to open Detour, his first venue as a chef-owner, at the southeast inner-city suburb in mid-late June.

"It's all in for me with this one," Amos says. "When we open, it will be just inside dining (with about 70 seats), but in spring, we'll go to about 120, so it will be fairly big."

The contemporary share plate venue will occupy a tenancy at 11 Logan Rd, next to the recently reopened Crosstown Public House, in the former home of the old antique centre. It will sport polished floorboards, exposed ceilings and plenty of attractive architectural quirk.

"The kitchen will be open right into the dining room, so there's more energy for customers," Amos says. "Half the menu will be vegan, and all but two of the dishes will be gluten-free. We'll definitely be catering to allergies." Stay tuned.

FAMILY AFFAIR

Another generation of the Gambaro family is set to kick off into hospitality today with the launch of Cafe Gia at Herston, in Brisbane's inner north. The Butterfield St venture, in a Queenslander-style cottage, is the handiwork of **Alessandra Canilho**, a granddaughter of restaurant pioneer **Michael Gambaro**, her mother **Gina Gambaro** and sister **Isabella**.

Canilho says the venue scored a rare five-star rating from the council last week and there are plans to expand the 50-seater, once everything is running smoothly.

"My grandfather keeps telling me to keep it simple and small. That's how he started and he's done all right, so I think he knows what he's doing," Canilho says.

The Gambaro family started out with a fish and chippery. Now their business interests include Gambaro Hotel on Caxton St, Petrie Terrace, Gambaro Seafood Restaurant and Black Hide Steakhouse across the road.

Canilho says Cafe Gia will start in soft opening mode, but a full menu should be in flow by the weekend, with all-day breakfasts, blackboard specials and girther options such as nonna's meatballs in a panini with napolitana sauce and melted mozzarella. The coffee is Genovese.

WATTS NEW VENTURE



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Page 2 of 2

Mal Watts and rugby player business partner **Scott Higginbotham**, who own a handful of southeast Queensland venues ranging from West End's Habitat to Pacific Fair's Two Seasons Cafe, have quietly opened the new Forty West Cafe at South Ripley, in Ipswich.

Watts says he thinks it's the best venue the duo has done to date, but it marks a change of pace for the team.

"It's a very different site for us. We've opened a cafe bar on a \$3 million water park, so it's very family-oriented – all about the mums and bubs," he says.

Original plans to include a Grounds of Alexandria-style kitchen garden and petting zoo have been scaled back, at least for now.

"We're focusing on the cafe, but the land is there and ready to go – it will probably take another quarter."

Watts says designing a menu for the new venue has also made the team reassess the food offering at their other ventures.

"We'll be simplifying everything and going back to traditional classics with a twist – we're seeing a demand for that from the market."

Ex-Moose & Gibson chef Tim O'Connell will rattle the pans at Forty West.

HAMILTON SAYS HELLO

Atalanta Bar & Grill at Portside, Hamilton, will soon have a new street art-embellished neighbour, with chef-entrepreneur **Tony Kelly's** Hello Harry, a licensed burger bar, quickly springing up alongside. It's the third Hello Harry venture for Kelly and business partner **Scott Hoskins** and it's due to debut in early-May.

Hello Harry will occupy a 130sq m site, serving nine burgers ranging from a classic beef wagyu and a crumbed barramundi offering to a chickpea, labne, candied pumpkin and honey mustard burger for vegetarians. All burgers are served on house-made brioche buns.

EYE FOR THE TIGER

Bulimba is about to score a new speakeasy, prohibition-style dive bar. Owner **Robert Harding** hopes to start pouring at Blind Tiger from Monday. The new venue sits beside Harding's The Moustachery Barbering and the drinks list has been put together in consultation with bartender **Jesse Stowers**.

"There will be an emphasis on whiskey and rum, but we'll also have some cool cocktails," Harding says. There will be cheeseboards, charcuterie plates and the like.

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FLYING HIGH

The team behind Black Bird Bar & Grill are set to unveil an exciting new venue that will change Brisbane's function scene



Customised experience: Adonis and Nehme Ghanem with chef Jake Nicolson at the new Black Bird Private Dining and Events space beneath Black Bird restaurant on Eagle St, with great views of the Story Bridge and Kangaroo Point cliffs. Picture: Russell Shakespeare