

brisbane grapevine

LIZZIE LOEL



John Fink, creative director of **The Fink Group** was recently quoted as saying, "We were looking to take the **OTTO** brand outside Sydney and felt that Brisbane would be the perfect home. There are so many exciting things happening in Brisbane, not to mention the vibrant, growing food scene, it really is something I want to be part of. It goes without saying that diners can expect the same fresh, seasonal, produce-driven offering, with ingredients that speak for themselves, and that wonderful and seamless, quality of service we dish up down in Sydney."

And so he chose the beautiful **Dexus Group** building, 480 Queen Street, designed by renowned architect **Brian Donovan** of **Donavan Hill Design**, as Otto's first home away from home. Almost a holiday home with sweeping views of the Brisbane River and the Story Bridge that lights up like a Christmas Tree at night, the space is contemporary and takes from the successful Sydney DNA with inspiration drawn from the heritage-listed Woolloomooloo Wharf. The Brisbane sister venue features lots of natural materials including timber slatted walls and ceiling, marble resin and naval brass fittings. Like its Sydney counterpart, the menu, under the stewardship of Sydney sous chef, Will Cowper has created a produce-driven menu brimming with local ingredients. One such offering is the black and white tagliolini with Moreton Bay bugs, cherry tomatoes and basil

and another is the baby barramundi with salsa verde, already a famous staple of the Woolloomooloo menu. The wine list is also in good hands with ex-E'cco Bistro sommelier (and Good Food Guide recipient of the Pol Roger sommelier of the Year Award), **Alan Hunter** collaborating with **Ned Goodwin MW**, a Fink Group consultant on a line up that 'features the unique and celebrates the classics'.

Bar Otto, a casual eatery open for breakfast and lunch as well as a spot of spuntini in the evening, sits opposite the restaurant proper on the parkland level of the building. **Saatchi & Saatchi**-designed pasta packaging will serve time-poor workers of the 4000-strong building well, as will the locally roasted and powerfully fragrant **Blackstar** coffee. Parkland Level 4, 480 Queen Street, Brisbane. Phone (07) 3835 2888.

Staying with an Italian vibe, **Ristorante La Famiglia** also opened recently in a new building in the up and coming area of Woolloongabba. Once only known for its iconic cricket stadium, this suburb in the city's inner south is enjoying an influx of artisanal openings - quirky cafes, more established eateries, authentic pizzeria's dotted between homeware, antiques and furniture shops.

Deb & Cosimo de Nicholo's first restaurant has a traditional menu beginning with a wide range of assaggini followed by selections of pasta, secondi and contorni. Polpette



sfiziose, special meatballs coated in a deliciously sweet Napoli sauce is finished with asiago cheese and is delicious especially when paired with a glass of house chianti and a serving of involtini. Deliciously char-grilled eggplant is filled with minced beef, parmesan, onions and breadcrumbs and sports a robust marinara sauce. Channelling Puglia, the orecchiette alla cime di rapa e pancetta is a must-order – ear-shaped pasta is tossed with broccolini, crispy pancetta, fresh red chilli, garlic and a light dusting of grated parmesan. There's a bistecca served with potato gratin, mushrooms and chestnuts but the owners recommend La tagliata di manzo, a Tuscan dish of grilled sirloin sliced and mixed with peppery rocket leaves, salty shaves of parmesan and a healthy dollop of EVOO. Trafalgar Lane, 3/855 Stanley Street Woolloongabba. Phone (07) 3391 1045.

Casa Nostra popped up recently in the M & A Arcade in Fortitude Valley in the space previously occupied by the Americana style eatery Mighty Mighty. It's the latest venture for restaurant owners **Biagio** and **Sarah Biuso** who sold their eponymously named Red Hill restaurant (now **Colle Rosso**) in 2012 to sea change to Cairns. But the pair missed the hustle and bustle of Brisbane and wanted to return to their friends and customers so have opened a very traditional venue featuring a pizza menu alongside seafood dishes, pasta and slow cooked meat dishes that pay homage to Biagio's Sicilian heritage. Expect to find calamari fritti, black lip mussels in white wine and vongole and prawns with scampi in a creamy bisque sauce alongside ricotta and porcini filled tortellini, house spaghetti with pancetta and artichokes and veal scallopini with spinach, sage a asiago. Rosso pizzas are as popular as the bianche – quattro formaggi being the most popular of the latter and salami with fior di latte topping the charts of tomato-bases.

Finish with an affogato or maybe a little slice of pistachio semifreddo – you won't regret it. 6/100 McLachlan Street Fortitude Valley. Phone (07) 3257 0007.

Above left: Food from OTTO Restaurant.
Above right: Long thin pasta, smoked ham hock carbonara, pecorino, from OTTO restaurant.