

THERE really was a time where it was virtually impossible to get an authentic pizza anywhere in Brisbane. Few and far between were genuine wood fired ovens, thin charry bases and minimalist toppings but thankfully that has surely changed.

Beccofino had a new little brother called **Julius** in South Brisbane in late 2014 and **Tartufo** in Fortitude Valley has been renovated to include a giant pizza oven at the front of the venue manned by a specially trained pizzaiolo to create genuine Neapolitan creations.

English imports **Tom Sanceau** and **Bonnie Shearston** have been opening venues in and around the city for the past four years. **Canvas** in Woolloongabba was an immediate hit, as was **Public** and **Red Hook**, both in the CBD. Then came **Coppa Spuntino** around the corner from Red Hook and it's all about simple, delicious Italian food, from the nicely shaped pizzettas to the meatballs covered in a fine mist of pecorino. Entry via the pretty hedged courtyard leads to a well stocked bar where you can sit and eat under the glow of table lamps fixed at intervals along the bar. Stuffed baby squid is deliciously tender and perfumed with fennel, nicely formed gnocchi is paired with kale and walnut and a splash of truffle oil, and swordfish is pan seared with spinach and radicchio. There are six pizzas - three rosso and three bianco. The rosso versions are pretty classic, think tomato, bocconcini,



basil, rocket and mint. There's a little more lushness on the bianco line, with three cheeses, mozzarella, fior de latte and gorgonzola, and a spiky blend of artichoke, olives, anchovies and salsa verde. Shop 4/88 Creek St, Brisbane; phone (07) 3221 3548.

Across the river at South Bank, **Spaghetti House** has moved from its Boundary St location in the heart of the West End to the tourist and restaurant-laden enclave of South Bank. It's less than a kilometre but worlds apart - back in West End boho meets ethnic diversity and there's a healthy level of grunge, organic options and serious coffee haunts. South Bank, on the other hand, has a plethora of larger, more commercial venues, many family-friendly and many themed in the current trends. Wood panelling inside gives a cosy feel and outside the footpath dining wraps around the corner block under a canopy of leaves. The menu has always been large and it seems to have increased even more. Traditional sections separate pasta from risotto, cichetti from carne and contorni, and of course pizza has its own little slice of the menu. Figs wrapped in prosciutto are covered in a mild gorgonzola sauce - a classic combination and this one blends sweet and savoury with proficiency. Ditto the crumbed baccala balls with a picante smear of sauce. Simple pasta dishes of garlic and chilli, cacio e pepe, pesto all feature as do the classics - amatriciana, arrabiata, funghi and marinara, and there's also a cheesy baked crab cannelloni with a powerful tomato sugo. 164 Grey St, South Bank; Phone (07) 3844 4844.

There's pizza on the menu at **Communal Dining** as well, but this menu is geared towards a more modern Australian theme, running down the current trend of multiple sections spanning several continents and cultures. "Sharing and starters" includes a cured meat board, spicy buffalo wings, salt and pepper calamari and nachos but it's the Moreton Bay bugs that appeal - juicy and lemony with house made cocktail sauce in a soft, sweet brioche bun, they slide down as a quick lunch or an after-work snack with one of the craft beers on tap. There's a burger section, "communal crumbs", which



includes a schnitzel, lamb cutlets and a delicious snapper with baby lettuce hearts and tartare, also made in-house. Pizzas are a little more avant garde but still stay true to tradition, with margherita featuring fior de latte and mozzarella, the funghi paired with taleggio and wood-fired chicken drizzled with a smoky barbeque sauce. There are five delicious and substantial-sounding salads - roasted beetroot with kale, quinoa, feta and pomegranate is dusted with zatar, there's a smoked chicken and bacon with avocado and ranch dressing, a classic Caesar and some crispy calamari with mint, chilli and lime. Five different cuts of beef hit the grill and are paired with a range of sauces, including house gravy, much more of a jus than a gravy, rich and reduced to perfection. Stick around for crispy meringues and passionfruit curd served with creamy chocolate ice cream or a hot caramel sundae; they're both well worth the sugar hit and those associated calories. Designed to appeal to a large demographic with the indoor/outdoor lines blurred and the decor colourful and contemporary, this type of venue can often serve these wide ranging menus that can be all too ordinary. Communal does the opposite - high quality ingredients prepared with care and served simply and honestly. 266 George St, Brisbane; phone (07) 3003 1056.

Top & bottom: Spaghetti & meatballs and figs wrapped in prosciutto with gorgonzola fondue from the Spaghetti House.