

brisbane grapevine

LIZZIE LOEL

BRISBANE is in the grip of a great culinary casualisation. And where once this might have also meant a culinary decline, nowadays it heralds in the exact opposite.

Former chef turned operator **Luke Stringer** knows a thing or two about opening venues in both Melbourne and Brisbane, having a string of acclaimed venues to his name in both cities. He was part of the opening team at the glamorous Oyster in Little Burke St before returning to his native Brisbane where he opened Hampton's Home Living in Paddington in Brisbane's leafy inner west. An interior and home wares store with a cafe out the back on the wraparound veranda with views of the Mt Cootha hills, he sold that to become GM of the Ole Group, which boasts venues such as Ole Fuego at Indooroopilly, Ole and Mr Paganini, both in Southbank. Now he and partner **Ashleigh Bates** have returned to hilly Paddington and opened their most casual venue yet, **Winner Winner**, a chicken-centric diner with a clipped list of craft beers and boutique wines, an inspired cocktail list and some decadent-sounding milkshakes. Crunchy coated with your desired level of spice, the chicken is accompanied by your choice of sides, including shoestring or curly fries, zesty slaw, onion rings, cheesy corn, sweet potato chips and pickles. There are a number of burgers also on offer and everything comes with lashings of sauce from garlic or blue cheese aioli, tomato and Winner Winner special sauce. 233 Given Tce, Paddington; phone (07) 3368 2677.

Brother's **Cameron** and **Jordan Votan** count their first restaurant venue as a massive success. **Happy Boy**, a modern Chinese restaurant with Sichuan leanings, occupies the space formally a loading



dock for one of Brisbane's oldest venues, Little Tokyo on the CBD fringe.

Cameron was a co-founder of The Iconic, an online clothing store and has recently launched Spokenwine, an online bottle that curates independent producers from across the country, with a group of partners. Happy Boy is best known for its punchy, spicy dishes and very, very laid-back service but the other stand out is the wine list. Happy Boy's list is derived from Spokenwine's extensive and eclectic range, there's only ever one varietal and everything has the spice and temperature of the provincial cuisine. Now the Votans have headed into the CBD proper with the opening of their second venture, **Greenglass**, an upstairs 60-seater in George St, in the heart of the legal district. Wine is the main focus with over 100 listed and more to choose from in the cellar, and the food is anchored in the classics, mainly French, though it is far from fussy and very inexpensive. 336 George St, Brisbane.

Over the river at West End in Brisbane's inner south Holloway Eyewear's design studio has been home to Pizzartist, a free-ranging pocket-sized pizzeria with an ever-changing line up of classic Italian pizzas and pastas. Now Holloway's **Raffaele Perischetti** has overhauled the menu and named the new incarnation **Luigi's Italian**, after his paternal grandfather. Charry bases are topped with classic flavourings of pepperoni (the smallgoods are made on site), mozzarella and fresh herbs, and there's a range of pastas, meatballs, vegetable dishes and salads like caprese and eggplant parmigiana. 69 Hardgrave Rd, West End; phone (07) 0439 178 787.

For the past few years **Mary Randles** has been helping husband **Philip Johnson** run their iconic Brisbane eatery, e'cco Bistro on the edge of the CBD.

An overhauled menu with gentle Middle Eastern influences and a fresh new makeover to the much-loved dining room have given this much lauded bistro a timely renewal and now she is on to bigger things. Donning a beret and strutting her stuff around her own venue, **Madame Rouge** sits just opposite James St in the M & A complex, formally Gordita,

part of restaurateur Jamie Webb's ever-growing empire. He also owns Lefty's Old Time Music Hall, Peasant & newcomer Anchor & Hope in Paddington. Madame Rouge is swathed in kilometres of red velvet curtains, round leather banquette seating surrounds the vast, u-shaped marble bar and the food screams pared back, clever French interpretations - classic techniques and flavour combinations paired with lots of lovely chardonnays, rosés and beaujolais. Gratinéed goat's cheese soufflé, duck liver paté with sauterne jelly, boudin noir and seared scallops and a perfectly neat pizzaladiere all make impressive starters, but none more so than the tartare de beouf served with a raw quail egg and potato lace crisps. Duck confit sits over du puy lentils, the John Dory is grilled and served a la meuniere and the poitrine d'agneau, a breast of lamb over petits pois a la Francaise melts in the mouth. And just when you think you've died and gone to Paris, along comes dessert. Tarte au pomme has a scoop of calvados ice cream and nougat glacé has fresh raspberries to cut through the sweetness, but if you prefer a liquid finish try one of the dessert cocktails - berry vanilla passion, chocolate or espresso martini are also available alongside an impressive array of cognac, brandy and digestives. 100 McLaughlin St, Brisbane; phone (07) 3252 8881.



Top: Interior of Winner Winner restaurant.
Above: Delicious burger from Winner Winner.
Left: Food from Winner Winner.