

## brisbane grapevine

LIZZIE LOEL

JAMES Street in Brisbane's iconic Fortitude Valley has become a mecca for fashionistas, with national and global brands choosing the leafy locale to hang their shingles.

There's a mini David Jones, dedicated to women's fashion, popular Brisbane-based boutiques Samantha Ogilvie, Maryons and Calexico sit beside other Australian labels such as Scanlon & Theodore, Lee Mathews, Gail Sorronda and Camilla.

And in between all the glam are some of the best dining spots and watering holes in the city. Gerard's and Gerard's Bar are here and so are Harvey's and Tinderbox, Cru Bar & Cellar and Bucci.

**The Calile Hotel** has been a work in progress for the past three years but the jewel in the James St crown opened its elegant doors in October, showcasing superb design and an old Hollywood-meets-Palm Springs vibe, by architects Richards & Spence.

Roomy, light-filled retail shops line the street level and there's a cosy **Lobby Bar** open seven days to bunker down in, post retail therapy session. Rooms range from "essential" to luxury suites and all feature almost Japanese style design restraint and liberal use of natural marble, soft honed woods and deluxe soft furnishings.

The pared back aesthetic continues throughout all aspects of the complex but the first floor is where it all sparkles. A crystal clear rectangular pool greets you as you arrive upstairs on to the pool deck, surrounded by eight shaded cabana's and rows of sunbathing lounges above which a line of Cocos palms sway in the tropical breeze. It's also where you'll find **Hellenika**, **Simon Gloftis'** Modern Greek, also at Mermaid Beach on the Gold Coast. Subtle references to tavernas on Greek Islands - wooden tables and rattan chairs, striped umbrellas



above the outdoor tables, lend an authenticity and feeling of relaxed comfort to the place, as does the family-style menu of Hellenic classics.

The Hellenika signature banquet is hard to resist and perfect for larger tables. It begins with beautifully seasoned raw fish dressed with olive oil from Crete, regani and Cypriot sea salt and a plate of taramasalata with chunks of bread and EVOO. Kolokithia, zucchini chips sprinkled with grated kefalograviera comes next followed by a plate of calamari strips soaked in butter, oregano and lemon. Crumbed king george whiting is sublime as is the square pasta and beef shank ragu, cooked until the beef falls apart at the touch.

And speaking of falling apart at the touch, you will only need a fork for the Junee lamb, baked with lemony potatoes and a crisp Greek salad, that offsets the richness of the meat courses. Finish with a bougatsa, a custard filled filo parcel and a scoop of sweet/savoury halva ice cream.

The poolside cabanas can accommodate up to eight guests. You can book them through the restaurant and take dips in the pool between courses. There are also event spaces that have already become popular with brides, fashion houses and the design community. Pool Deck Level 1, 48 James St, Fortitude Valley; phone (07) 3252 2060. The Calile Hotel, 48 James St, Fortitude Valley; phone (07) 3607 5888.


The brick and concrete bunker that fronts the popular **Barracks Complex**, Petrie Tce, on the Brisbane CBD fringe has been home to some interesting venues over the past few decades. Starting life as part of the adjacent army base, it then morphed into The Underground nightclub, an '80s institution for over a decade.

After a stint in corporate life as a property developer's office, the moody, heritage-listed space underwent an extensive makeover and

emerged as Burnt Ends, an attractive but short-lived venture by Nantucket Kitchen owner TJ Peabody. Now its lights are shining bright once more with the recent takeover by seasoned professional **Javier Codina**, the Spanish marvel behind Gianni (and then Moda) in the CBD for the past 20 years. He and general manager **Francois Le Saveant** had been looking for a new location, one better suited to the current and ongoing trend of casualisation. Rather than stay "suited up" after work, many prefer to flee the city and find relaxed venues on the outskirts and city fringe where the service and food offering is more relaxed, though still offering the same, first-rate quality and deliciously innovative cuisine. **Moda Tapas Brasa Bar** opened in early October with a light, bright menu to please most sensibilities. Summery dishes include reef fish ceviche with orange blossom, zucchini flowers with a salmon mousse and crayfish vinaigrette, and Harvey Bay scallops with jamon and saffron cauliflower, but there are also more robust flavours in dishes such as black pudding with roasted pears and Manolete chorizo with Bundaberg capsicums. And then there is the brasa, an enclosed charcoal oven made and imported from Spain that delivers the smoky deliciousness to meats, fish and poultry like no other.

There's a black onyx tomahawk, a veal fiorentina, wagyu marble score nine, and juicy spatchcock which is served with charry corn and sides of patatas bravas and heirloom cauliflower.

The room is moodily lit with exposed brick and beams adding warmth and that characteristic "bunker" vibe. Booths clad in green leather run down one wall and there's a pretty indoor/outdoor room opposite with bistro seating separating the two.

"Javier's table experience" is a concept made popular while still in the CBD - three courses, including a range of tapas and entremeses followed by a selection from the brasa, then dessert all selected by Javier and served family-style to the whole table - works especially well in the new, more laid back environment. The Barracks, 61 Petrie Tce, Brisbane; phone (07) 3221 7655. 

*Top:* Pool at The Calile Hotel, photo credit Sean Fennessy.  
*Left:* Interior lobby of The Calile Hotel, photo credit Sean Fennessy.

