

Geebung chef creates club culinary delights

Upmarket fine-dining from the local club bistro.

It is a concept that is becoming the future for dining in clubland and Geebung-Zillmere RSL executive chef Grayson Dowling is in the midst of preparing his second culinary degustation menu for his club members in six months.

Grayson and his dining team made Courier-Mail headlines in April with his six course menu of seafood scallops with dill and vanilla bean beurre blanc, in-house hickory smoked, tea-infused duck breast, stuffed eye fillet on blue vein potato puree, and trio of chocolate mousse with select cheeses, complemented by palate cleansing sorbets and a selection of Taylors Clare Valley fine wines.

And now Grayson is endeavouring to do it all again in August with new and inspired culinary delights, complemented by the right wines, in the good company of Geebung RSL members.



Grayson in the kitchen

But as Grayson sees it, the degustation menu is only one part of his grand plan to modernise and lift the club's dining reputation and take-back some of the local market share.

"We don't want our members feeling like they have to go into the city or Newmarket and pay \$30-\$40 to receive quality, upscale food. "We want our menu to be attractive to our regular older crowds but also to entice the younger 20-30 year-old generations because they are our future clientele."

Grayson says he believes a good menu should reflect old experiences and create new ones.



Chicken wellington

"Every club will know that their regulars will always want their standard fish and chips but if I can get them to try a different twist like the fresh fish of the day with a macadamia nut crusting and a mango coriander salsa then I have introduced them to something new."

"It's one thing to get a chicken breast on the plate and put a Thai coconut sauce on it, it would be adequate enough. But if I can take the chicken breast and fill it, stuff it, colour it, slice it and fan it on a bed of rice noodles with a Thai coconut sauce, then I have reinvented it and done my job."

Grayson is a natural in his club environment, giving out friendly hellos to all of the members and dealing personally with any customer feedback. He

is passionate about his vision for the future of club hospitality and it's hard to believe that he ever left the industry that he loves so much. Starting his career in 1996 at the Broncos Leagues club, Grayson went on to pursue more fine-dining experiences in prestigious inner-city Brisbane hotels like the Sebel & Citigate, learning and developing a creativity that is now the foundation of his club cuisine revolution.



Seafood chowder

In 2001 Grayson found his way back to clubland at the Geebung-Zillmere RSL and has been there on and off ever since. "They always ask me why I keep coming back here but it's because I just love the place. Clubs in general are so different to standalone restaurants because you really feel like you're a part of something. "Clubs should have the advantage over restaurants because we are entire entertainment precincts.

We provide the bar, the bistro, the coffee lounge, the entertainment, the gaming and the functions. "So in my opinion, if we have to provide our members with a little extra effort to make their dining experience exciting and get them through the door next week, then it's worth my time." Grayson's extra efforts come straight from the heart and many of his modernised dishes and upscale twists are inspired from dear family members and childhood memories that he unlocks and shares with his members.

His very dear and extremely popular signature dish: seafood chowder. Full of secret ingredients and personal touches, the chowder is hearty and plentiful with seafood galore. Mussels, baby octopus, prawns, scallops, fresh fish and squid are swimming in a subtle creamy base that is perfectly seasoned, not too sweet and not too salty, to achieve a perfect balance of seafood flavours. Served in generous portions with toasted garlic bread, you can understand why this one is a member's favourite.

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A reinvented member's favourite: chicken wellington. A variation on the traditional fully encased wellington, this tender chicken breast is first stuffed with mushroom puree, wrapped in a ribbon of puff pastry with a tomato relish/sauce/salsa and served on a bed of greens.

Grayson's signature dessert: double chocolate brownie cake. A rich and dense milk chocolate brownie cake, with dark chocolate ganache and white chocolate shatter. The triple chocolate elements are complemented by a serving of fresh strawberries and vanilla bean ice cream.

For further details on the Geebung-Zillmere RSL's upcoming degustation dinner, call the club on 3265 3711.