

# brisbane *grapevine*

by Lizzie Loel



Nearly two years ago **Tony Smith** and his wife **Sam** opened **Cream**, a European style cafe and patisserie serving pastries, cakes and miniature desserts as luxurious as the name suggests. Located in a small shop on a main road of Coorparoo in Brisbane's south, Cream quickly earned itself a reputation as one of the best the city has to offer with its stylish looks and beautiful patisseries. And for good reason - the coffee is great and everything that is served uses only the finest ingredients. Now **Tony** and **Sam** have turned their attention next-door to **Double Cream**, a small restaurant and bar that is simply stunning in its simplicity and stylish warmth. Dark wood panelling makes a dramatic backdrop for the cream, high-backed leather chairs and white-clad tables and a hint of stainless steel rimming the bar adds a little lift. An oval nook at the back of the restaurant is upholstered in black leather and the marble table seats up to six.

The kitchen is in the very capable hands of **Trent Robson**, a young protege of some of

Queensland's leading chefs who recently returned from an extended stint in London. There he worked in well-known venues such as **Le Trompet** and **The Glasshouse**, gaining valuable experience in classical and contemporary cuisine. **Robson's** menu is small but extremely appealing - you want every entree and every main! Foie gras and quail ballantine is served with piping hot fig and hazelnut brioche, cauliflower pannacotta sits beautifully with fresh sand crab and the roasted pheasant breast with pheasant ravioli is simply stunning under its velvety mascarpone jus.

It goes without saying that there's no slouching on dessert though, considering the neighbours. Attention to detail is the key phrase at both **Cream** and **Double Cream** and is evident in every aspect of the business.

Fine diners lamented the closing of **Epicureans**, a glamorous little venue in the heart of the New Farm restaurant hub that specialised in French/Japanese cuisine complemented by a great wine list. Now the site has been taken over by **Cathy Joyce**, a restaurateur from the Whitsundays in Northern Queensland. Cathy took over in March, quickly implementing a more casual menu with an emphasis on quality fare at realistic prices. Lunch in particular is very light with southern Mediterranean influences and at night the scene changes to one more intimate and slightly more formal. Tables are clothed, lights are dimmed and the food takes on a more substantial air.

**St Paul's Tavern**, on St Paul's Terrace on the outskirts of the CBD, has undergone some major cosmetic surgery and emerged a stylish new pub with a great little bistro called **Halo's**. Sydney boy **Mark Maric** has



Above: 'Cream' interior Left and below: 'Cream' recipes

come on board to head up the young team in the kitchen after moving to Brisbane with his wife **Mary** and their three children. Maric gained a solid grounding in classical techniques during his apprenticeship under chef **Philip Challis**, who also trained a young **Tetsuya** for a time. He spent the next few years working for **Neil Perry** in both **Rockpool** and **Rockpool Catering** as well as three and a half years at the **Bather's Pavilion**. At Halo's he combines these skills, delivering both light, fresh Asian flavours and great Mediterranean dishes.

Lutwyche, in Brisbane's inner

north, has been enjoying the aromas of **Va Bene**, a cosy little Italian Trattoria in the **Windsor International Motel**. With a large and loyal clientele of local Italians, the menu has been dictated by the customers' desires for some time now. Now the owner, **The Butterfield Family**, in conjunction with chef, **Michele Loffredo**, has decided to formalise this style by decreasing the size of the written menu and increasing customer participation in deciding the nightly specials. Waiters will suggest the specials and diners can chop and change according to their whims. Not a bad plan.

