

McGRATH

THE WEEKLY MAGAZINE



28 NOVEMBER 2009

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Master chef Thomas Johns has traded in the high pressure stakes of running a two-hatted Sydney restaurant to cooking world class dinner menus for the homebound social set.

04 Café/recipe

Dolcini, Putney
Tomato tartin with black olive tapenade and caramelised onion



150 auctions and open for inspections

Suburb	Bed	Bath	Car	Weekend	Guide
Allawah					
33/432 Railway Parade	3	2	1	Sat 1:00PM	Over \$45
Anmadale					
51 Reserve Street	2	1	0	Sat 11:45AM	Over \$70
Arncliffe					
16 Towlers Street	2	1	1	Sat 9:00AM	On request
Avalon					
26 Ruskin Rowe	4	2	1	Sat 2:15PM	Over \$1
Avoca Beach					
3/145 Avoca Drive	2	1	1	Sat 2:00PM	Over \$46
Balgowlah					
4/157-159 Condamine Street	3	2	2	Sat 11:00AM	Over \$2
Bangor					
7 Inglebar Close	4	3	2	Sat 2:00PM	On request

06 Property of the week

A spectacular family haven showcasing stunning ocean views and magnificent outdoor entertaining spaces.

*Maximum SMS cost 55c.
For terms and conditions mcgrath.com.au/mobileterms

issue 44 *

28 November 2009

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Cover image: Thomas Johns of Dining Abode

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You'll always find him in the kitchen at parties

Master chef Thomas Johns has traded in the high pressure stakes of running a two hatted Sydney restaurant to cooking world class dinner menus for the homebound social set.

By Tony Brown



LOOKING AT ease, relaxed and very content, Thomas Johns bears none of the stressed fatigue marks worn by many of the celebrity restaurateurs that regularly grace our television screens. He's thrown in the dish towel, as it were, and walked away from an esteemed Sydney eatery - something that he worked tirelessly to achieve. "It was a really easy decision to make", he says casually. "Being head chef and the owner of a business takes a lot out of you and my time became too important to me."

Trained in London and with over 15 years experience as a qualified chef, Thomas Johns came to Australia in 1993 where he honed his skills as sous chef at Matt Moran's Aria Restaurant.

Johns joined East Sydney's Pello Restaurant as head chef in 2001 and within a year had achieved a prestigious chef's hat from the SMH Good Food Guide. Three years later he bought the restaurant and in the following year was awarded a second hat. The two-hatted restaurant continued to be a hit with diners and critics alike.

So what can make a leading chef, fuelled by the clanging of pans, creative

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juices and the babble of full houses not want to continue forever? "Now that I've got a family my priorities have changed. The restaurant became very hard work and my time was limited."

Johns, his wife Caroline and 18 month old son Tyrone searched for a solution that would balance a happy family life and a passion for food. A stint in Mollymook on the NSW south coast didn't work, cooking casually doing agency work proved unsatisfying, so between them they came across a novel concept.

"I'm taking the best things about working in a restaurant with me and leaving behind the parts that I really didn't enjoy."

Thomas Johns

The new venture keeps Thomas Johns in the kitchen, just not his own. Dining Abode is a personal and private dining service with an award winning chef. Johns will design a menu, bring the ingredients, cutlery, water jugs ... everything to your home and prepare a restaurant quality meal for you and your guests. "It's not like I've closed the restaurant and I'm lying around on Bondi Beach", he insists. "This is really hard work but it's doing the thing I really love. Not balancing accounts and paying bills every week"

All the prep work is done at Sails Restaurant on Lavender Bay where Johns has the use of a commercial grade kitchen and world class facilities.

He then turns up at the private residence (with a waiter) and takes over the kitchen while dinner party hosts can relax and focus on their guests. "Clients can sit back, enjoy their party and I leave the kitchen exactly as I found it so when they wake up, there's nothing to do."

Johns is renowned for his delicate modern European cuisine. Using fresh seasonal ingredients (and where possible local), Thomas introduces a masterful twist of tastes and textures to his contemporary style of cooking and offers a choice of a three course menu, eight course degustation, canapés for cocktail parties as well as cold buffets for easy summer entertaining. Vegetarian options are also available and menus can be adapted to suit special dietary requirements.

"I'm taking the best things about working in a restaurant with me and leaving behind the parts that I really didn't enjoy. My wife Caroline handles all the marketing so we really are spending more time together as a family."

"It becomes affordable for customers when you take into account babysitter fees and cab fares but the best thing about it is you're in your own environment"

For the time being Johns is focusing on keeping the business manageable. "I don't want it to get too big", he says. "It's the type of service that really needs to be hands-on with a personal touch. That's the part I love the most; being creative with menus, hands-on with food and producing dishes that I'm proud to serve." *

diningabode.com.au

