

SE QWeekend  
HD TOP TABLES

WC 1,563 words  
PD 3 May 2014  
SN The Courier-Mail  
SC COUMAI  
ED 1  
PG 23  
LA English  
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Shes often told its a dream job being a restaurant reviewer, but Lizzie Loel works hard to pick her ten favourites, in no particular order, between Noosa, Brisbane and Burleigh.

## 1 THE FISH HOUSE

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Happiness is a glass of Picpoul de Pinet (a sassy French white varietal) and the raw platter on a sparkling day at one of the front tables of this Burleigh bistro. Surfers entertain as you sip and sample what fish and shellfish should taste like. The marinade that bathes three different species is so good, you could drink it, and the simple, lemony fish soup is positively medicinal. Thin spaghetti is tossed with chunks of bug meat, or sea urchin and garlic, or you can go basic with fish and chips of King George whiting or rock ling. Even a quick meal

here is a celebration of whats great about our state: laid-back hospitality and glorious seafood with a view of one of the nations favourite surf breaks. Sister restaurant Hellenika, nearby at Nobby Beach, lacks a view but channels the casual hospitality and generous share menus of the Greek Islands.

50 Goodwin Tce, Burleigh Heads, ph (07) 5535 7725,

[thefishhouse.com.au](http://thefishhouse.com.au)

## 2 TARTUFO

The Percuoco name is synonymous with great Italian cooking and Tartufo, Fortitude Valley, owned by chef Tony Percuoco and his wife, Gordana, is no exception. These first-generation Australians are fourth-generation restaurateurs with sugo running through their veins and the ability to take simplicity to heightened levels. Everything about the place is grand - the zinc bar runs the length of the room, red leather booths that line the walls seat at least six, and the latest addition, a mosaic-tiled wood-fired pizza oven, boasts epic proportions. The menu is traditional, arranged in sections of entres, pasta, salads and mains. Take my advice and order a banquet and make sure you include the vitello tonnata, which is delicious, tangy and sweet, and the mini calzones filled with chunks of salami that permeate the cheesy ricotta filling, topped with the family sugo.

Emporium, 1000 Ann St, Fortitude Valley, ph 3852 1500,

[tartufo.com.au](http://tartufo.com.au)

## 3 BERARDO'S

This Noosa stalwart, a second home for locals and tourists alike, has chef Tim Montgomery (ex-Bacchus, Newcastle) at the helm and his approach defines the transition from paddock to plate. Montgomerys food is elegant, technically near-perfect, with inspired flavour combinations and whimsical flourishes that add dimension, texture and always have a purpose. White Pyrenees lamb with sweetbreads, chickpeas, eggplant and mint softly channels flavours of the Middle East. Moreton Bay bugs with sweet corn, morels and foie gras, and

Fraser **Island** spanner crab and Maroochydhore swordfish with radish and celeriac remoulade are examples of how the local catch marries with classical technique and a side order of wow.

Upper level, Ocean Breeze Resort, Hastings St, Noosa, ph (07) 5447 5666,

berardos.com.au

#### 4 GERARD'S

Reclaimed timber, Moroccan tiled walls, futuristic light fittings and a massive concrete bar make this one of Queensland's most striking fit-outs. The food is equally remarkable, drawing influences from the Middle East and North Africa, and it's so good you simply have to share. As clever as chef Ben Williamsons menu and presentation are, it's not as if you need tweezers to divide things up. Suckling pork is steeped in buttermilk with parsnip bark and Aleppo kimchi; Murray cod is paired with mussels and oysters in kishk (dried yoghurt) with sweet onion; and fermented green strawberries and slow-braised breast of lamb sit in radish leaf cream with fresh and pickled radishes and preserved orange. Breakfast on the weekends is exotically delicious the Baghdad eggs, sardines on toast and eggs poached in garlic yoghurt with organic sourdough soldiers ensure a great start to the day.

14/15 James St, Fortitude Valley, ph 3852 3822,

gerardsbistro.com.au

#### 5 SICHUAN BANG BANG

Curiously, this small shopfront in Brisbane's west still bears the retro sign of the **Chinese** takeaway it was in the 1950s. Inside, dramatic red and black walls, traditional wooden furnishings, fresh pots of citrus, cut-glass soy bottles, oriental lamps and colourful parasols all create a warm, exotic ambience. The Sichuan Province is known for its bold, impactful flavours, all well represented in Bang Bangs appealing line-up of dishes. Mapo doufu, minced pork and wok-sautéed bean curd is mouth-wateringly spicy, as are kung bao prawns

with chilli, sautéed green capsicum and spicy peanuts. This BYO haunt is the perfect place to bring a **group**, and chilli levels range from mild to through-the-roof. Monday is Peking Duck Day and at \$10 a serve (until **sold** out) represents great value on what is often an overpriced dish. Dumpling Tuesdays are also popular.

8 Wongabel St, Kenmore, ph 3378 8389,

sichuanbangbang.com.au

#### 6 MOGA

The traditional Japanese welcome, irasshaimase, is enthusiastic and swift and the whole experience moves quickly from there. Whether you sit outside in the courtyard or inside in wooden booths surrounding a sushi train, you will have menus, water and your waiters' attention in seconds. Inside, you can choose from dozens of freshly prepared morsels, such as smoky salmon and avocado rolls, piping hot chicken karaage, smoked eel nigiri and tuna salad rolls. Ordering la carte never disappoints and there's a blackboard of specials, which might include crispy salmon rolls, tempura oysters, and skewered pork belly roasted over the binchotan coals of the robata grill. The courtyard and main dining space are divided by a pretty Japanese-inspired garden. Sake and shoshu, served warm in earthenware

flasks, Japanese and local craft beers and a range of cocktails augment the small wine list.

2/146 Baroona Rd, Rosalie, ph 3367 2808, moga.com.au

#### 7 ESQUIRE

Esquire chef/owner Ryan Squires borders on the obsessive about the procurement of sustainable seafood, visiting boats and trawlers daily for his supply. He then cooks it over Australian charcoal, lending a unique and irresistible flavour while maintaining the true characteristics of the fish. Sommelier Peter Marchant has brought flair to the wine list and his effervescent sharing of knowledge has none of the stuffiness that can be associated with this level of dining. The menu is a juxtaposition of almost primal cooking methods and some of the most advanced techniques of the era.

145 Eagle St, Brisbane, ph 3220 2123, esquire.net.au

#### 8 URBANE

Alejandro Cancino is the real deal. Just 30, he has experience in some of the worlds highest-ranking restaurants, including two years at Mugaritz in Spain (ranked fourth on the San Pellegrino Worlds Best Restaurants 2013 list), was named UK Young Chef of the Year in 2008 and has a string of accolades to his name since arriving in Australia a few years ago, including 2013 Australian Gourmet Traveller Best New Talent and 2013 Queensland Good Food Guide Chef of the Year. Now co-owner of Urbane and The Euro with Andrew Buchanan, he has left his purist mark on both venues, fusing styles and techniques without labelling them geographically. Choose from five- or eight-course herbivore or omnivore degustation menus that are delicately and beautifully balanced. Whether its a dish of sweetbreads with leeks and watercress or a perfectly formed ball of cumquat sorbet that cleanses the palate between courses, prepare to be surprised and delighted by every clever mouthful.

181 Mary St, Brisbane, ph 3229 2271, [urbanerestaurant.com.au](http://urbanerestaurant.com.au)

#### 9 BLACKBIRD

Its the newest CBD hotspot, with an elaborately kitted-out bar overlooking the river and a tasty bar menu. Or you can sink into a velvet banquet and let chef Jake Nicolson prepare a pleasing feast. Nicolson left Melbournes Circa The Prince to head up Blackbird, and his partner and sommelier, Penny Grant, runs the cellar. Grant is a human compendium of old and new world wines. Ask her to recommend something white and crisp with one of the shellfish platters before moving on to a gutsy red to accompany your choice of beef, from Kobe

wagyu sirloin and Ranger Valley black Angus hanger steak to a Mayura Station full-blood wagyu tomahawk for two. If youre into sharing, try the Murray cod wrapped in paperbark with lemon aspen and paperberry, or chicken wrapped in vine leaves with native thyme, plus a range of sides (go for the truffled mac and cheese gratin).

123 Eagle St, Brisbane, ph 3229 1200, [blackbirdbrisbane.com.au](http://blackbirdbrisbane.com.au)

#### 10 1889 ENOTECA

Private rooms can be dreary spots with corporate-looking decor, but not at 1889 Enoteca where large groups dine in the rustic, charming basement. The brick-walled room is moodily lit and furnished with a collection of bottles and antiques. Upstairs also retains original features of the old building, creating a perfect showpiece for a menu that channels the great enotecas (wine shop diners) of Rome. Bread and pasta are made on-site, and many of the meats are cured here as well. Pasta is simply dressed spaghetti with cacio e pepe (cheese and pepper), for example and balance is everything. Mussels pop after a poaching in white wine, garlic and chilli, and oxtail melts into its clear broth, the richness cut by chicory and zucchini flowers. The wine list is long, but theres always someone to help you

navigate the organic, natural and biodynamic maze.

10-12 Logan Rd, Woolloongabba, ph 3392 4315,

[1889enoteca.com.au](http://1889enoteca.com.au)

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