



# LIZZIE LOEL

Celebrity chef Ben O'Donoghue's first Brisbane venture looks sure to be a hit

## City to surf

**T**HINK of a surf club and you think of great ocean views, burly lifeguards, rolling, crashing waves, beer and no-fuss food. You don't think of a man-made lake surrounded by sand in the heart of a city and an upscale, albeit casual eatery serving simple, elegant dishes on a terrace with a backdrop of a river and a glittering CBD skyline.

Despite the lack of waves, Kodak Beach at South Bank now has an eponymously named Surf Club and it is TV chef and author Ben O'Donoghue's first Brisbane venture, in partnership with the Katarzyna Group, which also owns Cloudland in the Valley.

Follow the bougainvillea pathway to the edge of the beach and look up, take the stairs to the first outdoor level to the bar or continue up on to the dining platform where the kitchen opens to the large, wraparound terrace. Both are covered overhead but it's a very summery venue and plans are afoot to increase the coverage from the elements.

Comfortable white moulded chairs are pulled up to undressed tables, napkins are paper and plentiful and plates are shaped like plump boomerangs.

Once greeted, we are told to choose a table anywhere that is free, given water and menus and then left to our own devices for a little bit too long. By the time we flag someone down, we know what we want to eat as well as drink and, with the business part of the meal taken care of, we settle in to take in the overhauled space.

The menu is printed on a yellow and navy card with stylised curls (waves?) and giant headings for the various menu items: starters, mains, nippers, crustacean bar, share plates and the daily surf report, which is a dish for each day of the week. Saturday is whole grilled Thai-style reef fish, Wednesday is stir-fried blue swimmer crab, Thursday is jambalaya and Friday the sour fish curry is Kerala-inspired.

The crustacean bar is filled daily with whatever fresh, local seafood Ben can get his hands on and that supply is plentiful. Groaning platters of crustaceans, mussels and oysters served hot and cold just like a surf club will set you back \$100 for two but will stump any appetite.

Or you can just have a plate of glistening oysters with a variety of dressings or half a kilo of Gold Coast prawns with lime mayo. Share plates are Mediterranean-influenced with a "long board" of antipasti or a "boogie board" of sourdough bruschetta with a variety of toppings.

Seafood dominates the main menu and we are torn between vanilla and vodka smoked ocean trout and Snowy Morrison's hot smoked salmon with kipfler potatoes and horseradish until we spot Moreton Bay bugs, grilled and served simply with pancetta. Bugs are curled on to skewers for cooking, wedged between fresh bay leaves and topped with a large chunk of pineapple, charred until tangy and slightly caramel. The skewer is removed for serving and everything is doused with a chilli and mint dressing.

For us, flavours are spot-on, fresh and sharp but one of the bugs

was cooked too long.

Non-seafood options include Meredith goat's cheese mousse with heritage tomatoes and a crostini spread with tapenade or carpaccio of kangaroo with a fetta dressing. Wasabi prawns are wrapped in kataifi pastry and set over small cubes of watermelon and red papaya garnished with coriander all under a creamy wasabi dressing.

Fresh sage and rosemary and anchovy burnt butter poured over a fine and perfectly crumbed chicken "snizzer" raises this simple dish into another level.

It's rich, crunchy and, though you won't find it on a detox menu, it is tangy and good, as are Spring Bay mussels poached in a tomato-based broth spiked with chilli.

After scoffing several slices of ciabatta soaked in the poaching broth after the plump mussels are gone, we can't do dessert but I nearly swipe a tiny waffle cone topped with chocolate ice cream from a nipper simply because it looks great and is the right size.

Opening glitches aside, this will doubtless prove a popular spot for families and anyone pining for a surf-club-in-the-city experience.



**Sumptuous:** Fresh sage and rosemary and anchovy burnt butter take the surf club chicken "snizzer" to a new level and, below left, chef Ben O'Donoghue. Pictures: Bruce Long

### HOW IT RATED SURF CLUB

The food ..... 14/20  
 The staff ..... 5/10  
 The drink ..... 3/5  
 The X-factor ..... 3/5  
 The value ..... 6/10

The total out of 50

31

#### Address

30AA Stanley Plaza South Bank Parklands, South Brisbane; ph 3844 7301  
**Food** Modern Australian, seafood emphasis

#### Drink

Licensed  
**Hours** Mon-Fri 9am-late, Sat & Sun 7.30am-late

#### Chef

Ben O'Donoghue  
**Owner** Ben O'Donoghue, Katarzyna Group & Phil Rhodes

**Wheelchair access** No  
**Parking** Parking station on-site

#### Prices

Entrees from \$10.50  
 Mains from \$19.50  
 Desserts all \$12.00

**Green guide** Sustainable, local and organic produce used as a priority.

**Snapshot** Take a basic surf club menu and give it a modern makeover and utilise some beautiful local ingredients and you have Ben O'Donoghue's CBD slice of the coast.