

Shortmarket Club chef duo go back to basics with The Commissary

Shortmarket Club co-founders Chef Wesley Randles and Simon Widdison are set to pare things down with their new dinner-only dining eatery in Cape Town. Under the mentorship of Luke Dale-Roberts, the duo will officially open The Commissary in Shortmarket Street on 1 November 2018.

As if The Test Kitchen, The Pot Luck Club, and The Shortmarket Club aren't enough to keep Dale-Roberts and his crews on their toes, the opening of another cutting-edge eatery is sure to set both local and international food wires alight. The Commissary is a new pared down, food market concept that Randles and Widdison and their team will head up six evenings a week.



Back to the basics

"A commissary is a basic provisions store which you'll find in the army, hospitals, and prisons – and while we definitely won't be serving prison fare, we're taking things back to basics in a big way with our new dining venture," says Randles.

"I've had the idea in my head for a while – a space where people can come and enjoy seriously approachable, affordable food with big, unapologetic flavours," he adds.

The Commissary will be under the same roof as its sibling inner-city eatery but will be reached by an otherwise nondescript street level entrance.

“I wanted to create something that really epitomises getting back to basics – it’s a no reservations restaurant, there’ll be communal tables in an open plan space, there’ll be music playing and a busy atmosphere. We’ll be serving food on eco-friendly, disposable plates and the most basic cutlery – it’s a cool, no-frills atmosphere with small plate, flavourful food taking centre-stage,” he says.

Made for 21st century diners

The Commissary venture is a partnership with multiple award-winning Dale-Roberts acting as a mentor and advisory partner and with the chef pair and their team operating the rest of the business.

“Over the years I’ve realised that one of the things that really motivates me is helping team members reach their potential and find their own way - getting to play a part in that journey is so exciting,” he says.

“Wesley came to me with the idea a while ago and I loved it - it’s a back-to-basics approach to food which really resonates with me and everything I love about food and I couldn’t think of anyone more driven and committed than Wesley to make it work,” adds Dale-Roberts of his 29-year-old mentee.

Randles has risen through the ranks as one of the strongest members of his team – first at La Colombe just over a decade ago, then moving to open The Test Kitchen alongside him, opening The Pot Luck Club and most recently co-founding The Shortmarket Club, which opened in July 2016.

With space for just 45 diners at a time and a busy, convivial atmosphere, there’s no doubt The Commissary will hit a gap in the ever-changing Cape Town restaurant market – it’s a fast-paced eatery perfect for 21st century diners with things to do and places to be.

Quirky details and great food

Likewise, the design of the space by the business’s design director Sandalene Dale-Roberts taps into the busy atmosphere of the soon-to-be-open space.

“I wanted to really ramp up space with colour, it’s the kind of concept that allows for it. Food markets have taken the world by storm and we also wanted to reflect that style of dining and entertainment – you’ll find communal tables with built-in lazy Susans and I’ve also designed chairs that have been printed with pattern and colour,” says Sandalene who explains the look and feel of The Commissary doesn’t reflect a specific look and feel, “We’re wanting to encompass a mood we’re seeing everywhere where quirky, interesting details are partnered with great food.”

The question on everyone’s lips, of course, is what style of food can be expected from Randles and The Commissary team?

“We’re busy with the menu at the moment and while I don’t want to give too much away, what I can say is that people can expect a considered small-plate menu, big and bold flavours and a definite street food influence. As with The Shortmarket Club and all of the eateries in the business, the attention to detail, the use of the very best ingredients and the focus on flavour first remain our cornerstones, everything else that’s added is a layer,” says Randles.

The wine list at The Commissary will also be small and carefully crafted.

“We’ll be serving around ten wines by the glass, from entry-level offerings to serious heavy hitters, most important to us is that they cope well with a wide variety of food and flavours,” he says.

The Commissary is located at 88 Shortmarket Street and is open for dinner from Monday to Saturday from 5pm until 10.30pm. For more info call (+27) (21) 422 2902 or email .

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