



Food traveller

by Lindy Alexander

Dining boom adds to Noosa's charm

With a swag of new restaurants, bars and distilleries, some of the best food and wine in Queensland is no longer a flight of fancy.

Noosa has always been a favourite destination for southern sunseekers. Now with a slew of fresh restaurants, wine bars and distilleries added to the favourites, Noosa and its charming villages are experiencing a dining boom just in time for the mid-year school holidays. And with Bonza, the new Sunshine Coast-based domestic airline taking flight from September, it's only going to get easier to land at the doorstep of some of the best food and wine in Queensland.

Alba by Kuruvita

Tucked away in an estate with sweeping lawns, exclusive residences and a golf course is Alba – a breezy restaurant, cocktail bar, pizzeria, providore and cooking school. This is Peter Kuruvita's newest venture, and the curves, natural timber, crazy paving, brass accents and linen-clad tables make the space incredibly inviting.

Kuruvita's commitment to seasonal and local produce is evident in the extensive menu, and most dishes nod to his Sri Lankan heritage. A trio of masala potato dumplings are perfectly crisp and the low hum of chilli is cooled by the coriander-mint raita. One of Kuruvita's most enduringly popular dishes, spiced snapper curry, is on the menu, as are his Moreton Bay bugs, served with a choice of four sauces (ginger, chilli and shallot; black pepper and curry leaf; black vinegar; or drawn lemon butter).

Don't miss "Alba hour" from 4pm when bartender Angel lives up to his name by creating cocktails and mocktails that seek to give you wings.

● 3 Alba Close, Noosa Heads, albanoosa.com.au

Seabourne Distillery

If you had to distil the flavours of Noosa into one drink, you'd be hard pressed to do better than Seabourne's Coastal Dry Gin. Head distiller Thiago Lopes has created a contemporary dry gin that calls on native white kunzea flower and sunrise lime to impart fresh citrus notes, while river mint and local sea parsley place the spirit in the traditional lands of the Kabi Kabi people. Particularly exciting is the Sunset Bitter, a bold and fragrant aperitif built on a berry gin base with native botanicals. Drop into the distillery and let Lopes guide you through the range.

● 9 Rene Street, Noosaville, seabournedistillery.com.au

Herbert

Noosa is well and truly seeing the rise of excellent plant-based dining options, and Herbert (where there's only one meat dish on the menu) is a star newcomer. It's the model of a contemporary restaurant, boasting rendered walls, simple timber chairs, black-rimmed mirrors and shades of emerald, fern and olive green. It's hard to think of a more appealing way to eat vegetables – from the smoked sweetcorn dip with an undercurrent of chilli and chives, and tapioca fritters (crunchy golden pillows served with a sticky eggplant jam), to a boat-shaped wedge of cabbage, yielding and deeply earthy with a miso caramel.

But be careful; this place may just turn you into a vegetarian.

● 1 Arcadia Street, Noosa Heads, herbertrestaurant.com

Nudge Nudge Wink Wink

Having returned to Australia for a funeral, Sam Saunders had every intention of going back to his life in New York. The pandemic, however, had other plans. Stranded in Noosa, the one-time model, actor and high-flying advertising executive missed the bars he frequented in The Big Apple. "There wasn't

anywhere for grown-ups to go out except to a pub," he says.

Enter Nudge Nudge Wink Wink, Saunders' decadent speakeasy-style cocktail lounge with lapis-hued velvet banquettes, pink, fringed, post-modern "wink" lamps, and plush mustard swivel chairs. Bucking the trend of focusing on local wine and spirits, Saunders deliberately goes after "the best small-batch artisanal producers, regardless of whether they're Australian or not". Each cocktail on offer has three versions – the house version, the wink wink ("the house on steroids") and the nudge nudge ("it's a whole new level"). An example of a nudge-level cocktail? The \$101 negroni served with three fresh oysters topped with three types of caviar.

● Rear, 26 Sunshine Beach Road, Noosa Heads, nnuw.com.au

Atelier Wine Bar

Behind the blush-coloured gossamer curtains and under a vaulted ceiling sits a long, blond timber table. Welcome to Atelier, a modern take on a European cellar and Noosa's newest and most intimate wine bar pouring rare and premium wines.

Building designer Jared Clout and clothing designer Chris Earngey teamed up with Mark Smith to create the eight-page wine list, and using Coravin (a neat tool that allows



Clockwise from top: Noosa's main beach is a key destination; Nudge Nudge Wink Wink; Aromas restaurant; Alba by Kuruvita; and (inset) Alba's tuna pork. Photos: Jesse Lindemann, Lindy Alexander, Shirley Andrews

you to pour a glass without pulling the cork), they're able to offer every wine by the glass or half-glass.

Choose from exclusive wines such as the intense, citrus-forward 2019 Jean-Luc Mader Riesling Rosacker Grand Cru Alsace or an earthy 1947 Fontanafredda Barolo.

● Shop 3, 9 Sunshine Beach Road, Noosa Heads, atelierwinebar.com

Notch Noosa

In keeping with its pared-back design, the ethos at Notch is simple

– premium seafood that's affordable and sustainable. The menu changes daily and features local fish, from Tin Can Bay prawns with a piquant dipping sauce and Coral Coast barramundi with tempura vegetables, to reef fish fragrant with coconut and lemongrass.

● 14 Sunshine Beach Road, Noosa Heads, notchnoosa.com

Lindy Alexander was a guest of Tourism Noosa.

Forever favs

They may not be new, but judging by the local following, these classics aren't going anywhere.

Aromas

The cafe has a distinct French bistro feel, highlighted by the blue-and-white striped awning, navy chevron woven chairs and marble-topped tables. Start the day with lime and chilli crab scramble or a smashed avo with tangy pickles to cut through the salty, golden plank of halloumi.

● 36 Hastings Street, Noosa Heads, aromasnoosa.com.au

Bistro C

Overlooking Laguna Bay with a deck strung with twinkling fairy lights is Bistro C, a sophisticated restaurant where the earthy tones of the decor often match the linen-clad patrons. The dishes carry an Asian influence (like the ocean trout tartare with ponzu, yuzu pearls and pickled daikon) and are brilliantly executed by head chef Dayle Merlo. The onset of the cooler weather is heralded by the arrival of confit duck leg served with celeriac puree, beetroot relish and Brussels sprouts.

● 49 Hastings Street, Noosa Heads, bistro.com.au

Belmondos Organic Market

A veritable Mecca of all things local, organic and delicious. Housed in brutalist concrete in an industrial estate, you'll find Eumundi Meats (a free-range and organic butcher), fresh produce, baked goods from Tanglewood Bakery, Clandestino Roasters and more.

● 59 Rene Street, Noosaville