

Biographical details

Tony Papas

Restaurateur and Coffee and Bread Man

Tony Papas was born in 1958 in Auckland, New Zealand.

Education

His education in the food industry began at Auckland Technical Institute, London City & Guilds, (1976-1977), followed by courses at Le Notre Pastry School, Plaisir, Paris (1986) in desserts and pastries; East Sydney Technical College, (1993-1994) in Bakery Technology; Roseworthy College, Adelaide (1994-1995) Certificate and Advanced Certificates in Wine Appreciation & Sensory Evaluation.

Career highlights

1976 Royal Albert Hotel, Queen Street, Auckland

Initially worked as a kitchen hand and after became increasingly interested in becoming a chef, started an apprenticeship at the Royal Albert Hotel and commenced studying at Auckland Technical Institute (now AUT).

1977-1978 Salter's Restaurant, New Market, Auckland

Employed by Salter's Restaurant as an apprentice chef and completed his apprenticeship.

Salter's was a small restaurant that accommodated approximately 40 people and the food served was high quality and bistro orientated. Salter's was owned by Dean Williams, a future partner in the Bayswater Brasserie. It was here that the idea for the Bayswater Brasserie originated and before leaving Salter's, it was planned that Tony would later help establish and work at the Bayswater Brasserie as head chef and partner.

1979 Bacchus Cafe, Amsterdam

In 1979 Tony travelled in Europe and during a stay in Amsterdam, gained employment with an American gentleman who was just establishing a wine bar. He was employed as the chef prior to the opening of the café and was responsible for planning the menus, deciding upon and buying kitchen equipment, buying produce and running the kitchen single handed.

1979-1980 L'Auberge, Amsterdam

This was a one Michelin star restaurant and Tony was employed as a sous chef, serving approximately 30 covers per night. The restaurant served very specialised French food and was his first encounter with a broad range of produce including North Sea seafood and all varieties of feathered and furred game, various wild mushrooms, truffles and French wine. As sous chef, Tony was responsible for everything from making bread, to the dessert trolley, as well as entrées and main dishes and sauces. He had two apprentice chefs under his supervision.

1981-1982 Butlers Restaurant, Sydney

After leaving Amsterdam, Tony came to Sydney to become a partner in what became The Bayswater Brasserie. He was hired by Damien Pignolet from Butlers Restaurant and worked as head chef to Mogens Bay Esbensen, responsible for

the general running of the kitchen and interpretation of the dishes from Mogens' repertoire. During this time he worked on the planning and development of the Bayswater Brasserie.

1982-2001 Bayswater Brasserie

The Bayswater Brasserie opened in September 1982 with Tony as executive chef and partner in the business. Over those 20 years, Tony worked to improve the food and facilities of the Brasserie and wrote the Brasserie Book of Food in 1989. The Bayswater Brasserie was largely responsible for a major shift in Sydney restaurant diners' eating habits and broke new ground in terms of the produce offered on the plate.

Because the restaurant was so busy there was an opportunity to develop the various sections in the kitchen, from butchery section to pastry kitchen. The Brasserie kitchen offered the scope for easy innovation and Tony offered a quick response to new ingredients.

In addition to the menu's signature dishes there was a blackboard menu of daily specials which allowed for a great variety of dishes according to market produce. This enabled Tony to draw on a wide range of influences and ideas from travelling, living overseas and the evolution of an Australian cuisine.

1993 San Francisco and Berkeley, USA

In 1993 Tony stayed with the great 'east meets west' chef and food writer Ken Hom. During that time he worked at Chez Panisse in Berkeley and Zuni Café in San Francisco. Chez Panisse had a unique 'Table d' Hotel' French provincial menu built from seasonal local produce. This was an amazing organisation with a recycling program, farms and inspirational cooking. The alumni of this iconic restaurant include Jeremiah Towers, Steve Sullivan and Judy Rogers, to name a few. Tony left with an arm full of books given to him personally by Alice Waters.

Zuni was in many respects an Italian version of Chez Panisse, run by Judy Rogers.

On this trip Tony discovered the 'Acme Bread Company' run by Steve Sullivan. Having had a personal interest in bread making since the age of 15, Tony felt as if he had found the ultimate bread in the large sour dough loaf he was seeing all over San Francisco. He discovered a recipe for 'Levain bread' which had been donated by Steve Sullivan, Chez Panisse's first baker, in one of the books that Alice Waters had given him.

Tony held on to this recipe and eventually rewrote it, and a couple of years later he produced a starter with organic unbleached flour from Kialla and unsulfured, unsprayed wine grapes. This ferment is now 11 years old.

On a subsequent visit to San Francisco and Los Angeles Tony visited the Acme Bakery production facility and spent some time there with the bakery manager and on the same trip visited the La Brea Bakery operated by Nancy Silverton.

1997 The Boathouse on Blackwattle Bay

The Boathouse on Blackwattle Bay is the second restaurant to be opened by the Brasserie Group. Tony was involved in all aspects of the design of the restaurant, particularly the kitchen area. This is a 100-seat restaurant on the first floor of the University of Sydney Boathouse. It has a view across Blackwattle Bay to the Fish Markets, Anzac Bridge and a flipside of Sydney skyline.

The style and concept of the food is based on the highest quality Australian seafood and produce, cooked in modern Sydney style. It encompasses live seafood and cooking techniques and styles from Europe and Asia. Tony set out to offer a seafood-centric menu following on the philosophy and thinking of the Bayswater Brasserie. The menu is comprised of some signature dishes such as oysters from all around Australia, snapper pie and live crustaceans. The rest of the daily menu is a result of what is best and most interesting on the day, either direct from source or from carefully selected suppliers with the guests encouraged to share dishes.

The menu is changed daily and printed lunch and dinner.

In August 2003 the restaurant was refurbished, including a relocation of the bar and the introduction an area of banquette seating.

1999 Brasserie Bread Company

Inspired by the Acme and La Brea Bakeries in California and a need to create bread with its own unique character for our restaurants, Michael Klausen and Tony Papas developed a range of sourdough breads using organic grape juice as ferment. The bread is made from highest quality biodynamic flour produced in Queensland. Originally the small bakery operated in the Bayswater Brasserie, then moved for two years to Waterloo. They have since converted a large warehouse in Rosebery to accommodate Brasserie Bread Company and Allpress Espresso under the one roof.

1999 Allpress Espresso

Michael Allpress and Tony decided to combine their talents to bring the Allpress Espresso brand to Sydney. Recognising the growing demand for excellent espresso and with a passion for coffee they created a new Sydney roastery with barista training and specialised espresso machinery. In February 2002 they opened the Allpress Espresso Bar and have achieved best Café in NSW for 4 consecutive years (RCA awards), serving simple sandwiches, pastries, retail breads and exceptional coffee.

2005 Brasserie Bread

In 2005 Michael Klausen and Tony opened a bakery and retail café at Banksmeadow, inspired by Acme, La Brea and their own experiences over the past years. One recent reviewer wrote 'Staff gift-wrapped the entire range of loaves like jewellery at Tiffany & Co.' The café also serves great sandwiches, light meals and sourdough pancakes.

2005 'The SMH Award for Professional Excellence'

'Tony Papas, for giving us the iconic Bayswater Brasserie and the iconic Sydney view restaurant at the Boathouse on Blackwattle Bay, and for following it up with the tremendous Allpress Coffee and Brasserie Bread'

2006 'The Sydney Magazine Food Hall of Fame'

Sydney Magazine honours Tony Papas of Brasserie Bread and Allpress Coffee for excellence in Sydney food service