

10 Advertising feature The Rooftop Bar & Restaurant

# Rooftop bar's brews, views, food an open-air hit



The open-air Rooftop Bar & Restaurant, created above The Good Home gastropub in New Plymouth's Gill St, is the place to be, rain or shine.

The arrival of spring warmth and the easing of lockdown levels has patrons of The Good Home in New Plymouth looking up again, to the freedom of The Rooftop Bar & Restaurant.

The open-air restaurant and bar was created on top of The Good Home's existing Gill St gastropub premises and was completed just as Lockdown level 4 was initiated at the end of March. It sat unused then until the lockdown restrictions were relaxed weeks later.

When it eventually opened for business, customers loved the alfresco choices that fine winter days offered, and the views across The Landing and Huatoki Stream in front of Puke Ariki to the sea.

The Rooftop's immediate popularity vindicated the confidence that The Good Home's city owners, David and Sheryl Stones, had in their development.

"People have embraced it, and it's not even summer yet," David says. "It took off in level 2 and improved again in level 1; people enjoyed the space."

The Rooftop is a development that continues the forward-looking attitude of this entrepreneurial couple, evident back in 2000 when they opened Icons Stadium Bar downstairs with its 100-seat grandstand. The sports bar focused on local-interest in events like Hurricanes rugby matches, recalls David. "Every weekend, we were chocka with people wanting to go out to watch sports."

That has changed since, with most homes now boasting 55 and 60-inch, or larger, televisions and homeowners enjoying big-screen sports without leaving their home. "We had to adjust," says David.

In 2011, they rebirthed Icons as The Good Home. "We altered three-quarters of the place into a gastropub with the focus on food and a quality environment. Sheryl and I wanted to make sure it was very homely; a nice place to be with family and friends, an extension of their family home."

They created different 'rooms' for The Good Home, including the Dining Room, the Living Room, and the Sports Den – and even the Outdoor Yard, where patrons could enjoy a refreshing drink or tasty food on the sunny deck.

"Every area offered something special: the best steaks in town, our popular stone grills, after-work drinks, the buzz of a Quiz Night gathering."

That approach has reached a new level now on The Rooftop.

They had considered the idea for some years, David says. "At the time The Good Home was renovated, it was too expens-

ive and we couldn't do anything like this. As time has gone by, though, we have had the opportunity to do it."

The pair had noticed the popularity of rooftop bars on holidays overseas, and in this country. "We looked at rooftop bars all over the place and followed the Facebook page for Rooftop Melbourne Bars. I like to think there's a little hint of them here in little old New Plymouth."

New Zealand also had its share of rooftop bars that they checked out. "Who would have thought, even in Wellington, there would be over a dozen rooftop bars? We couldn't think of a worse city to have them with their wind and rain."

They engaged designers Boon and engineers Red Jacket to work out the practicalities of their project. "It became a job and a half," he admits. "Nothing is ever simple ... and it wasn't simple. We could have made a smaller version, or we could have done it like we have."

The result is a pleasing complement to the variety of hospitality venues in the city.

"We are so spoilt in New Plymouth for hospitality offerings, compared to other regions around the country. New Plymouth and Taranaki people don't realise how lucky we all are here. We have more great craft-brewery bars, amazing restaurants, great gastropubs, and good sports bars compared to other regions."

The Rooftop fits in well. "This is more of an asset now, not only to The Good Home and Icons, but also to the city, as a drawcard."

It was an obvious redevelopment for the otherwise wasted roof space next to the deck area that was part of the existing upstairs backpackers facility, David explains.

That deck area was halved to allow the creation of new toilets for The Rooftop, but was still a fully functional space for the backpackers, with one of New Plymouth City's best views for only \$30 a night. The layout of the backpackers lounge was also altered to allow the new bar facilities to be developed, giving The Rooftop bar staff one of the best working outlooks you could imagine.

A new exterior staircase on the western side of the building above the Huatoki Stream is the primary access to The Rooftop.

David points to the substantial roof structure on which the stairs are mounted. "The amount of steel that has gone into the build; if a tsunami or earthquake happens, you are better off

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watching it all from 'The Rooftop'."

The name for the new bar took a little time to decide. "We debated on a name for ages and it all came back to how we talked at the meetings, about going up to the rooftop. There was a certain amount of logic in calling it what it is."

The Rooftop is a larger area than most people realise, accommodating up to about 120 people seated on its expanse of timber decking bordered with glass balustrading. And it has the weather-proofing option of a retractable roof. "People will be able to enjoy it - rain, hail or snow."

Inclement weather prompted the extension of the retractable awning roof, which covers a substantial area of the deck with wind-down screens for further protection. Umbrellas are also positioned at tables around the outer edge of the deck. "The whole area is

really quite sheltered; it's really cool!"

David says The Rooftop has been well used in the weeks of minimum lockdown over winter, with efficient and effective infrared heaters installed. "We have even had blankets available," he says with a smile.

In the coming summer months, of course, interest in an alfresco experience will only increase. In-house music will help create a pleasant experience most days, with the added appeal of a lounge-type atmosphere with a background DJ or live entertainment on Saturdays and Sundays. "We want it to be a relaxing area," David emphasises.

The Rooftop is a different venue with different food offerings to that available below in The Good Home, he says. "But we have the same chef and kitchen, and a dumb waiter carries the food up to The Rooftop."

He describes the food options as sharing flavours and tastes, tapas-style, with a focus on seafood.

"The popularity of the venue has prompted an added design for an outdoor pizza oven, which will create an extra element to the space, with a gas/wood-infused taste to the pizzas, adding to the already great menu on offer. It's due to be completed in November."

Refreshment choices feature a satisfying selection of wines and beers, he says, including an increasingly popular Italian Peroni, and other quality line beers such as Emersons (Dunedin), Panhead (Lower Hutt), and Little Creatures (Perth), while Hawke's Bay cider Zephyr will provide an alternative.

"Local brews will also feature with a dedicated tap, which will see regular changes to highlight the regional flavours over the seasons."

David says the finish of The Rooftop facilities is a credit to the skills of the builders and subcontractors involved in the project.

"The modern artwork on the walls adds to the city flavour of street art, with a commission by local artist Phill Jones. He has done a great job."

Regular patrons had followed the building work with interest and patience, despite the inevitable disruptions, he says. That changed into ready appreciation as the changes in levels allowed them to experience the new facilities for themselves.

The coming sunny summer days and mellow evenings under the stars should have The Rooftop filled regularly with good company enjoying good food and good times - justifying the high expectations that David and Sheryl have for the future of their Good Home.

