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PINPOINT
MEDIA



An open fire, a friendly rivalry and a fond friendship will provide the warmth at a new restaurant in Dubai. Jesse Blake, 29, and Kate Christou, 31, are the chef team at Lowe, a new super hip eatery set to open in June at Koa Canvas, the stylish residential complex and work hub next door to Al Barari.

Kiwi Jesse and Greek/Australian Kate met while working in talked-about Melbourne restaurant Cumulus Inc. five years ago and have brought their kitchen synergy to this new homegrown concept. *EDGAR* met the talented culinary duo and asked them to explain their kitchen chemistry.

Tell us about your first meeting in that Melbourne restaurant.

Kate Christou: I was working in the upstairs restaurant and Jesse was working downstairs so we didn't have much to do with each other but we'd see each other in the hallway. We started to work together and it was a very sociable team. We worked very long hours so you get to know people very well.

Did you sense a professional chemistry?

KC: Definitely. I've worked with people where we've had a mutual understanding about flavours and a respect and a friendship comes from that.

Jesse Blake: Then one day we were approached about working in a restaurant in Perth called Petition.

When you start a restaurant do you first write down ideas or do you prefer to experiment in the kitchen?

JB: It starts with a piece of paper. I have

LIGHT MY FIRE

An Aussie and a Kiwi have joined forces to cook honest food at a new Dubai residential hotspot

BY ROB CHILTON



several battered old notebooks filled with ideas. Whenever something comes to me, I write it down and develop an idea of the dish before I get in the kitchen. A lot of the ideas come from things I've eaten in the past, restaurants I've been to, things that my mum used to make.

How many of these ideas are so weird that they never see the light of day?

JB: Hmm, quite a few! Here's one: lemon soda battered lychees. 'Fruit is cooked tempura style in a batter made with lemon fizzy drink, served on custard, so we get softness combining with crunch.'

KC: We really like food with texture.

JB: We don't want our food to be one dimensional in the mouth.

What's on the menu at Lowe that has good texture?

JB: The beef tartare is a good example. Smooth onion cream, diced beef, shallot, sliced radish and thin crispy shards of potato crisps flavoured with harissa.

How often do you eat out?

KC: A lot. We eat out more than anyone should. But it's great because we get so many ideas about what we like and dislike. We travel a lot too. We're always talking about food and ideas, our whole life revolves around food.

Are you usually on the same page?

KC: We have similar tastes but we do disagree sometimes.



Above: Pressed cucumbers with smoked labneh

Previous page: Roast pumpkin, sweet potato, chickpeas, zaatar, tahini and parsley salad



French beans, cucumbers, olive, hazelnut, orange and pomegranate salad



Buttermilk pikelets, cardamom maple, buffalo ricotta and smoked almond

When you're in a restaurant do you know what the other person is going to order?

KC: Yeah, we often want the same things.

JB: I know what Kate wants so I let her order first and then I'll change my order.

You both look pretty trim considering you spend so much time in restaurants.

KC: Yeah, we exercise and work a lot so we're always on the go. A lot of chefs use cream and butter to make food taste good, but we don't do that. We like lighter, heal-

thy dishes because we want people to feel good after eating our food.

What Dubai restaurants have you tried?

KC: We've been trying to eat out as much as possible. La Petite Maison was very good; Tomo served great Japanese food; Rang Mahal was excellent.

How's the menu looking at Lowe?

KC: It's all done. The food will be seasonal as much as possible and will probably change every two months. We'll also figure out what ingredients we can grow because we want to have a kitchen garden. Plus we'll have a dry aged room so we can create something unique.

How did the idea for Lowe begin?

KC: Mohammed [Bin Zaal, the entrepreneur behind Koa] heard about Petition and contacted us last summer to see if we could come to Dubai. He invited us to go for dinner but we said, 'How about we cook for you instead?' He took us to the supermarket and we bought ingredients to cook for Mohammed, his wife and his mother-in-law at their home.

JB: We didn't have time to make stocks or sauces but we brought things with us from Australia in a cooler box like bone broths.

What was the reaction?

KC: Well, they booked a flight to Perth to eat at Petition so we knew it went well.

Where does the name Lowe come from?

KC: It's an old Scottish word meaning 'warm light emitted by fire'. It fits with how we try to cook naturally - no foams or molecular gastronomy.

JB: Lowe also means feeling strong emotions or glowing with excitement about a person, and that's how we want people to feel in our restaurant. koa.ae

