



# Moving with the thymes

Yesterday's buffet is today's interactive dining experience at the Sofitel. writes **Lizzie Loel**

**T**Hyme2, pronounced thyme squared, is the replacement dining venue for both the Sidewalk Cafe and Carriages, previously fairly dated-looking places at what was the Sheraton Brisbane.

Changes have been afoot since the Sofitel took over a couple of years ago with a substantial upgrade of all amenities.

The foyer is now elegantly modern with clean lines that lead into the Cuvee Lounge where 20 champagne houses are represented alongside an organic cocktail menu as well as a martini menu.

The French chocolatier Lenotre, established in 1957 and bought by Accor, the parent company that owns Sofitel, is also employed with a range of desserts and patisserie and high tea is served at certain times. Lenotre also operates the prestigious two Michelin-starred restaurant, Pre Catelan in Paris and Antibes and employs more than 1000 staff.

Thyme2 is vast and weaves around corners over several levels. Furnishings are very attractive with the use of chocolate, wood tones and white marble reflecting light from large windows that run the length of one wall delivering a city view into the dining space.

Service is plentiful and friendly and, while an a la carte menu is offered, the buffet is now described as an "interactive dining experi-

ence". Two tandoor ovens sit behind walls of glass and curries, rice dishes and relishes accompany the fruits from their earthenware depths.

There are also wood-fired ovens, wok stations and a salad bar as well as a seafood buffet stacked with prawns, oysters, Moreton Bay bugs and smoked salmon, noodles, stir fries, roasts, baked vegetables.

The a la carte menu is pared back at lunch time, where a speedy 30 minute "bites" is offered for \$32. This may consist of king prawn and corn dumplings with sweet chilli dip, classic onion soup with double cheese crust, wood-roasted snapper with red onions and braised fennel, plus lenotre lemon meringue tart with lime cream.

Other menu items include a blue swimmer crab cake served with red pepper aioli and cucumber carpaccio, quail salad with fresh asparagus and foie gras and house cured sardines dressed with salsa verde and shaved fennel. Served on a large square plate, little white fish lay lined up in a colourful row dressed with a vivid salsa accompanied by the fine salad of fennel.

Unremarkable when eaten alone, it nonetheless worked altogether with an unexpected delicacy.

Also of high quality was the fillet of beef with Cafe de Paris butter (created in 1941 to accompany sirloin), a signature dish that features 120-day grain fed Darling Downs beef served on a potato

cake and steamed green beans. A hearty jus surrounded the fillet, perfectly cooked to our medium rare request.

The star of the show, the butter, usually robust with ingredients that range from curry powder, ground paprika, anchovies and an assortment of herbs, depending on whose recipe you use, was quite mild even when tasted alone. We surmised it had either been made and refrigerated for some time or had been made and not tasted sufficiently prior to completion.

If time is short, try one of the three "bites" lunches — the thyme2 version of a bento box. On another visit I sampled the number three, a four mini-course affair of lobster bisque, goat's cheese on rye bread, beef rendang and miniature Opera slices which were wonderful.

The dessert buffet is a seemingly endless array of miniature everything, from gluten-free meringues to mini brulees, chocolate mousses and creme caramels, butter sponges the size of a tablespoon, tiny tarts and baby patisserie and a spinning chocolate fountain into which you dunk strawberries or skewers of fruit and marshmallows.

The wine list is solid and well rounded focusing mainly on Australian and New Zealand labels and then of course there's that lovely line-up of champagne. Overall the quality and presentation of the food and the room are high and service seems to be genuinely helpful.



**THYME2**

**Address:** 249 Turbot St, Brisbane City  
**Ph:** 3835 3535  
**Hours:** breakfast Mon-Fri 6.30am-10am, Sat-Sun 6.30am-10.30am; Mon-Sat; lunch noon-2.30pm (Sun 11.30am-2.30pm); dinner Sun-Thurs 6pm-10.30pm, Fri-Sat 5.30pm-10.30pm  
**Liquor status:** licensed  
**Prices:** entrees \$15-\$24; mains

\$28-\$42; desserts \$14-\$16; wines \$36-\$485; interactive (new-style buffet) Sun-Thurs \$59, Fri & Sat early sitting 5.30pm-7.30pm \$78, late sitting 8pm-10.30pm \$85  
**Owner:** Sofitel Brisbane  
**Chef:** Marshall Orton  
**Smoking:** no  
**Parking:** on street, on site and valet  
**Wheelchair access:** yes  
**Other:** seats 240; all major credit cards; airconditioned

**THE SCORE**

**Food:** 14  
**Wine:** 15  
**Service:** 15  
**Ambience:** 15  
**About the score:** 0-5 don't bother; 6-9 needs serious improvement; 10-12 reasonable, room for improvement; 13-14 good; 15-17 very good, well above average; 18-19 exceptional; 20 perfection



THYME2 buffet's four-course speedy bites, above and right, elegant interior and the Lenotre dessert platter at Sofitel.

