



Spice Temple Melbourne

The challenge for 1:1 Architects' David Nock was to give this restaurant a street-hawker vibe in the middle of Melbourne's Crown complex

“We had a joint venture between ourselves and designer/architect Grant Cheyne to deliver two projects in Melbourne for Neil Perry—Spice Temple and The Waiting Room. They are both located in the Crown complex along with Neil's Rockpool.

“We wanted Spice Temple to have a street-hawker/food-market type of feel and for the fit-out to reflect that kind of rawness and simplicity. We designed the space to be moody and dramatic with theatrical lighting and screening to create a sense of personal space. When you're sitting down, your focus is on the comfort of the space and, of course, the food, which is what it's all about.

“The build and fit-out were fairly quick so we didn't have much time to deliberate on certain choices. It was great to work with Neil as he trusts decisions that have been made. He has a good working relationship with Crown and our builders were excellent in regard to project management and delivery of our concepts. It was a pretty intense period but everything was completed on time.

“The restaurant is over two levels. The first level faces the promenade off the Southbank complex and the second level is in the downstairs basement area. The position of the existing kitchen from the past restaurant was set so the travel path for waiters was a challenge. We needed to create a dedicated vertical circulation through stairs to facilitate that arrangement.

“Spice Temple is also linked by a shared tunnel and a number of spaces to Neil Perry's two adjacent venues, Rockpool and The Waiting Room. All the amenities are in one central location with shared back-of-house connections.

“All the fittings and furniture were designed and custom made specifically for Spice Temple. The beautiful Earl Carter photographic portraits help create the atmosphere and are a perfect embellishment to the space. In the bathrooms, even the hand basins were designed by us and custom built.

“To help create the mood, we used a number of different materials. The Axminster carpet has a floral texture and is quite light. We had to add some extra lighting to ensure the floor wasn't too dark. To establish a depth of field, we suspended simple timber planks in front of the walls. We then stuck Chinese newspapers behind them and lit it through the middle. The hand-crafted furnishings are all of timber and leather. The ambience is simple yet luxurious.

“We also used the services of lighting designers, Flaming Beacon. The pendants over the dining area offer perfect illumination to enjoy the experience of the food arriving. When patrons begin their meal, the plate of food is highlighted in front of them. The lighting also complements the Earl Carter photographs on display.

“Neil Perry is all about the food, the experience and the service. The design and the atmosphere of Spice Temple enhances the customer's experience of Neil's magnificent food. I eat there all the time.” ○

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