



# Dandelion

*Chef Geoff Lindsay stripped back a grungy Melbourne bar to create his new Vietnamese-inspired venue, as wife and co-owner Jane explains*

“**W**hen Geoff and I began searching for a site for Dandelion, we didn’t want anything that was city based. We were looking for somewhere that was a bit out of town and we found this great spot in Elwood.  
 “It was originally a single shopfront, just under five metres wide and over 30 metres long.

It had previously been a bar and was pretty grungy. However, when we removed all the plaster, we discovered these beautiful old brick walls that ran through the entire building. It took us four months to complete the refurbishment and we opened in April last year.

“Even though Geoff’s background is in fine dining, we wanted Dandelion to be more of a fun experience. The cuisine is Vietnamese but it’s a modern take. With that in mind, we wanted the interior to be contemporary and free of clichéd Asian artifacts.

“We divided the restaurant into three sections. The bar area is in the front section. The middle section has a beautiful vertical garden that brings in light and creates a feeling of space. The back section is our dining area and open kitchen. We’ve left the walls exposed in the bar but the main dining area is painted white to help demarcate the distinct zones.

“The building is so long and narrow, we took out the ceiling in the mid-section. This left a pitched roof of timber struts that helped create more space. And all the tables were purpose-built to be slightly slimline so as to fit nicely without overcrowding.

“Along with Eames chairs and Jean Prouvé bar stools, we also have timber stools made by Geoff’s cousin. They’re from fallen logs at his farm outside Warrnambool. It adds another layer of texture to the restaurant.

“The artwork collection is by [the late] Melbourne artist David Band. About 15 years ago, Geoff collaborated with David on a book called *10 Plates*. Geoff created 10 dishes and David interpreted those dishes as 10 limited-edition lithographs. We’re really happy that we’ve been able to put these up.

“We’ve also added some interesting art in the bathrooms, such as the Vietnamese propaganda art in the women’s toilets. In the men’s room, Geoff hung his favourite photo of

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AC/DC from the ’70s, and we often get comments from male customers.

“The kitchen is quite small and open so customers can see all the action. There’s also a bar that overlooks the kitchen that we call our Wrap-&-Roll Bar. That’s where our staff prepares rice paper rolls for the customers.

“We put Dandelion together by working to a really strict budget. Our interior designer Sarah Dowling (tel: 0417 384 350) and myself had a great time sourcing really interesting things that we probably wouldn’t have found if we had more money to spend.

“Dandelion is a restaurant that embraces the hustle-and-bustle. We like the place to be filled with lovely boisterous people having a great time. The design was based around that—really fun, open dining.” ○

WORDS: KERRYN RAMSEY