

Adelaide's coffee boom hits East End laneways

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Coffee boom hits Adelaide's East End. Photo: Nat Rogers/InDaily

There's a caffeine rush in back streets of Adelaide's East End, as high-end operators converge on the city's newest cafe hot-spot.

If Bar 9 and one of London's most revered coffee bars, Workshop, had a love child, chances are it may turn out something like Exchange Coffee.

The specialty coffee bar, with a clean sleek design, moved into Vardon Avenue, just off Rundle Street, last month, already drawing a following from local coffee lovers.

Exchange joins the recently opened **East End Providore**, Hey Jupiter, Sad Café and Nano in the buzzing back streets of the city's east, which is threatening to take over from Rundle Street as the area's main coffee destination.

Adding to the influx of new cafes, the Big Table from the Adelaide Central Market is set to open on Union Street later this year, with another prominent coffee chain planned for Vardon Avenue opposite Exchange.

Meanwhile on Rundle Street, iconic café Alfresco's remains on sale for \$445,000.

Exchange owner and barista Tom Roden, who studied a bachelor of media before coffee became his passion, believes he offers something different.

"Most cafés have a focus on food and also sell coffee, but I want to flip that around and focus on the coffee and sell food to match," he says.

Speciality coffee has taken off in Adelaide since Bar 9 opened in Glen Osmond. Roden worked with Ian Callahan at Bar 9 while leading up to the opening of Exchange, following a stint in London with Workshop.

"[At Workshop] we wanted to encourage engagement between client and baristas; the reason my bar is so clean with nothing to hide behind is because it opens it up for interaction.

"When you go to the bar you place the order with the person that will make the drink, most places you order with someone who has nothing to do with the process and that's open to misconceptions, mistakes and I just want everyone to have a broad understanding and knowledge of the coffee."

Exchange stocks coffee from Melbourne's Market Lane, which comes with a handy tasting card describing the flavours of the roast and where it comes from.

Despite the building competition in the East End, Roden thinks there is still room for everyone.

"Melbourne has been the benchmark for café and coffee culture for some time and I guess some people don't like to admit that, but they wish Adelaide was a little more like that with more back street culture a little more diversity and until recently Adelaide has been pretty homogeneous.

"But all we have to do is look at how businesses like Hungry Jacks, Burger Theory and Fancy Burger can all be competing - there's a market for HJs and there's a **market for Burger Theory**, just like there is a market for commodity coffee, the chains, and specialty coffee."

It was less than four years ago when Nano moved into the then desolate plaza opposite the Belgian Beer Bar. Ebenezer was then an intimidatingly quiet laneway with just a few niche clothing stores, and Chocolate Bean around the corner on Union Street.

With its wide open design Nano sparked life into the area, with retailers such as RHD and the Sad Cafe's sister store, hairdresser/clothing store DAS, luring back more customers.

"It's taken a while for people to start coming back here," Nano owner Lucio Capoccia said. "Adelaide people do not like going off the beaten track."

Nano has built a loyal clientele with a focus on simple Italian cooking, good coffee and friendly service.

"Adelaide has been lacking in the culinary culture of the rest of Australia for a long time, so competition is healthy and, ultimately, it's better for the consumer," Capoccia said.

Last year Hey Jupiter opened and the coffee hit had taken hold. The Maras group owns much of the property on the Rundle, Ebenezer and Vardon strip and said it wanted to create some life in the back streets.

"The East End Providore has been great because people have had nowhere to get all the stuff Daniele Forte-Binggeli's stocking, and she'll grow it based on demand," developer Steve Maras said.

"I don't think we are going to look to do any more with coffee because it comes to a point of saturation, and I reckon we are just at the right place."

Maras now hopes to add some night time economy to the area, starting with the opening of Burger Theory in his new building on the corner of Ebenezer Place and Union Street.

"I tell you what we do need is something open at night time," he said.

"We don't have any shops vacant but I'm sure [small bars] will happen because that's now the flavour of the month."

