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Mum Cha brings dumplings to Rundle Street

THE FORAGER

A new dumpling house in the East End will combine contemporary yum cha dishes with a focused wine list and tea selection, all courtesy of the team behind Mother Vine wine bar.



Located at 279 Rundle Street – just around the corner from Mother Vine in Vardon Avenue – Mum Cha is set to open on Monday.

“We wanted to create a new offering, one that was missing in the East End,” says general manager Patrick Madden, who for the past three years has managed Mother Vine alongside executive chef Kwan Yi Ying.

“There’s a lot of potential lunch trade around this area. There’s a lot of hospitality people who finish work and want to get a late-night fix.

“Plus, she [Ying] does the best dumplings.”



Frank Hannon-Tan, Pablo Theodoros, Melissa Theodoros, Kwan Yi Ying, Patrick Madden and Julie Sayasane are the team behind Mum Cha. Photo: Elizabeth Denning.

Located in the premises previously briefly occupied by chef and restaurateur Jock Zonfrillo’s Italian wine and snack bar Mallozzi (which closed in July) and before that Restaurant Iberia, Mum Cha is a narrow venue split across two floors of white walls, exposed stone and feature tiles.

The menu is designed to suit a range of tastes and will regularly change, although dumplings will remain a staple.

Madden says he and Ying – who was raised in Hong Kong – have been speaking about the idea for a dumpling bar for some time.

“We have worked together for four years and quite often we’ll have lunch together ... and [we’d] say, ‘Wouldn’t it be good if we did dumplings?’

“There are some great dumplings, on great menus, at great restaurants around the city – but it’s just one menu item, whereas we’re having that as the focus.”

Mum Cha’s dumplings will include the Korean-inspired kimchi mandu (which is packed with fermented vegetables and tofu), a prawn dumpling for seafood lovers, and a signature Shanghai dish – the soup dumpling.

“The dumplings will vary between three and five [per serve], but they are all hand-rolled in-house and have a garnish or element added to the dish. So, it’s not just steaming 12 dumplings and sticking them on a plate,” Madden says.

There will be hot and cold dishes and roving bite-sized extras such as salt and pepper tofu and marinated roast pork with crispy skin.

“Throughout the service there’ll also be yum cha dishes that come out that are not on the menu,” Madden says. “Staff will come around and you can opt to have a plate of that or you can say no.”

For those after something larger, and gluten-free, options will include Ying’s take on Hainanese chicken rice.

“We poach the chicken breast, make a chilli sauce in-house, add shallot oil and hot chicken broth, and you eat it together just like that,” she says. “It’s very simple, but very delicious.”

And, of course, there’s tea.



Photo: Elizabeth Denning

Mum Cha has three herbal teas: jasmine, chrysanthemum and ti kuan yin (a variety of Chinese oolong tea) served as a loose leaf in traditional pots.

“Having tea in yum cha is the traditional way,” Ying says.

“There is no way you can get rid of it. You sit down and people will ask you which type of tea you would like straight away. You have tea and then water is second and then you order your alcohol.”



Chef Kwan Yi Ying is a tea connoisseur. Photo: Elizabeth Denning

The popular Chinese lager Tsingtao will be available, and the wine list will be simple but thoughtfully curated, Madden says.

“We want to keep it to around 20 to 30 wines, exciting wines, wines that we believe suit dumplings, aromatic white wines, grower champagne, white burgundy – stuff that we love. Plus, we want to take care of our friends in the wine industry.

“We will also have the Mother Vine wine list available for people who want to stretch out a bit.”

Mum Cha will be open on Mondays from 11.30am to 5pm and Tuesday through to Saturday from 11.30am until late.



Photo: Elizabeth Denning