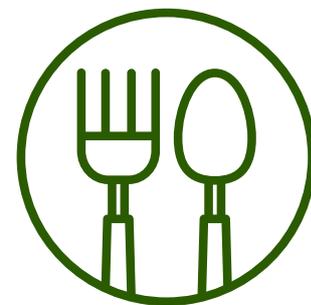


Local Food Innovators: Woy Woy Fisherman's Wharf



Evolving from a humble fish and chip takeaway to a coveted food and beverage destination, we spoke with third generation Owner/Manager Sam Clayton about the transformation of this popular establishment and how its sticking to its principles to offer fresh, flavoursome and sustainable seafood four decades on.

Fisherman's Wharf is a venue rich in history and an iconic fixture of the Peninsula landscape. How did it come to be?

My grandparents ran a boat hire operation from this very location. Local fisherman would hire their boats and return with an abundance of fresh fish and seafood, which they would often use as 'payment' to cover their boat hire costs. My grandparents soon discovered they were making more money on-selling the fresh seafood than they were hiring boats. And so, Fisherman's Wharf became known for this very reason.

How have you continued to incorporate these founding principles of fresh, sustainable and locally sourced seafood being the cornerstone of Fisherman's Wharf four decades on?

My wife Xanthe and I took over management of The Wharf in 2011. While we have re-imagined the venue completely, being a third-generation family business, it was important to me to remain focused on its core values and supporting our local seafood industry.

We try to source locally and sustainably wherever possible and are currently one of the only seafood venues on the Central Coast selling locally sourced seafood. We also aim to build our menu around local and seasonal produce.

Our mullet, flathead and silver bream come from Tuggerah Lakes. We source most of our oysters locally from Sydney Rock Oysters, and occasionally from Pacific Oysters at Patonga. Our whiting and jewfish are caught in the Hawkesbury River and our snapper, lobsters and sea bream are supplied by Terrigal Fisherman Mitch Sanders.

We also use around 200 kilos of lemons per week. Starkey's is a citrus growing family at Mangrove Mountain who supply all of our beautiful-on-the-inside bush lemons.

What have been the biggest changes since you've taken over the venue?

In 2017, we undertook a massive rebuild of the existing facility. We were closed for most of the year, as we needed to rebuild many of the original pylons supporting the venue. We worked with locals, LAW Building Design and Parkwood Homes, to create an architecturally designed, purpose built dining establishment, events and function venue that created a destination for people in the local community and beyond. This was a huge investment in both the business and the local culinary landscape.

When you're not at the Wharf, where do you like to go to eat and drink on the Coast?

We love the growing food culture at Woy Woy and on the Peninsula! Places including Tropicana Pizza, Young Barons, The Lucky Bee (now Hardy's Bay) and The Bayview are really raising the bar on the standard of culinary experience offered here on the Coast. We also rate Lords of Pour as the best caffeine hit around.

Where do you hope to see Fisherman's Wharf and the Central Coast food scene in five years' time?

Hopefully on a similar trajectory to where we are currently heading. We're excited to a part of the growing food culture here in Woy Woy, and we're hoping that initiatives such as the Woy Woy Town Centre Development & Activation will really take off to support the wider business community. We need Central Coast Council and local developers to get on board and help us #makewoywoygreatagain.

I'd also like to see a greater focus on sustainable and local seafood across the board. Hopefully for Fisherman's Wharf, we'll be continuing to reinvent ourselves while sticking to our core values.

What is your favourite dish on the menu at Fisherman's Wharf this season?

Definitely the Ceviche, in which we use local snapper, or the Chilli Crab. We buy as many Blue Swimmers Crabs locally as we can and when we get Mud Crabs, we use those also.

My sister Michaela was the SMH Good Living 2008 Sommelier of the Year and since we've reopened, she has created a wine list that has been specially designed to pair with all of the dishes.

As a takeaway option, you can't go past good old fashioned Fish 'n' Chips, made from Dusky Flathead.





Images courtesy of Nikki To

FIND OUT MORE

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