

Local Food Innovators: Suq Restaurant



We've all been dreaming of international holidays during lockdown, but what if you could enjoy the flavours of the Mediterranean, Asia, Northern Africa and France... without ever having to renew your passport or pack a bag?

That's the concept behind Wamberal's popular **Suq Restaurant**, where owners **Michael and Monique Guirguis** offer share plates filled with international flavours that are sure to leave your mouth watering.

As their globally-inspired menu continues to draw attention on the Coast and beyond, we caught up with Monique to hear how they're recovering from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Suq Restaurant has gained a solid reputation for being a 'must-dine' destination on the Coast. What do your customers say is their favourite thing about eating with you?

They say the share plate experience is unique, as are the various different flavours we offer.

The hospitality industry has gone through some massive changes in recent years, and it remains very competitive. What's the most innovative aspect of your business?

Our multi-cuisine share plates are not something that's been seen before on the Coast!



We love to keep it local, and we know you do, too. Can you tell us about some of the suppliers and producers you work most closely with?

We source our fresh produce from Fruit For All, who are a local supplier [based out of Berkeley Vale].

We buy our juice and sparkling water from Central Coast producer East Coast Beverages.

We're also proud to support Berkeley Vale Cellars, who are a local wine supplier.

It's fair to say that the COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on hospitality venues right across Australia, and the Coast certainly hasn't been immune.

What's been the biggest challenge for your business over the past couple of years?

The biggest challenge was making it through the COVID lockdowns, and then, dealing with the short supply of staff as a result. It has been devastating.

During this tough time, did you try to pivot or change your business model? If so, was the change successful?

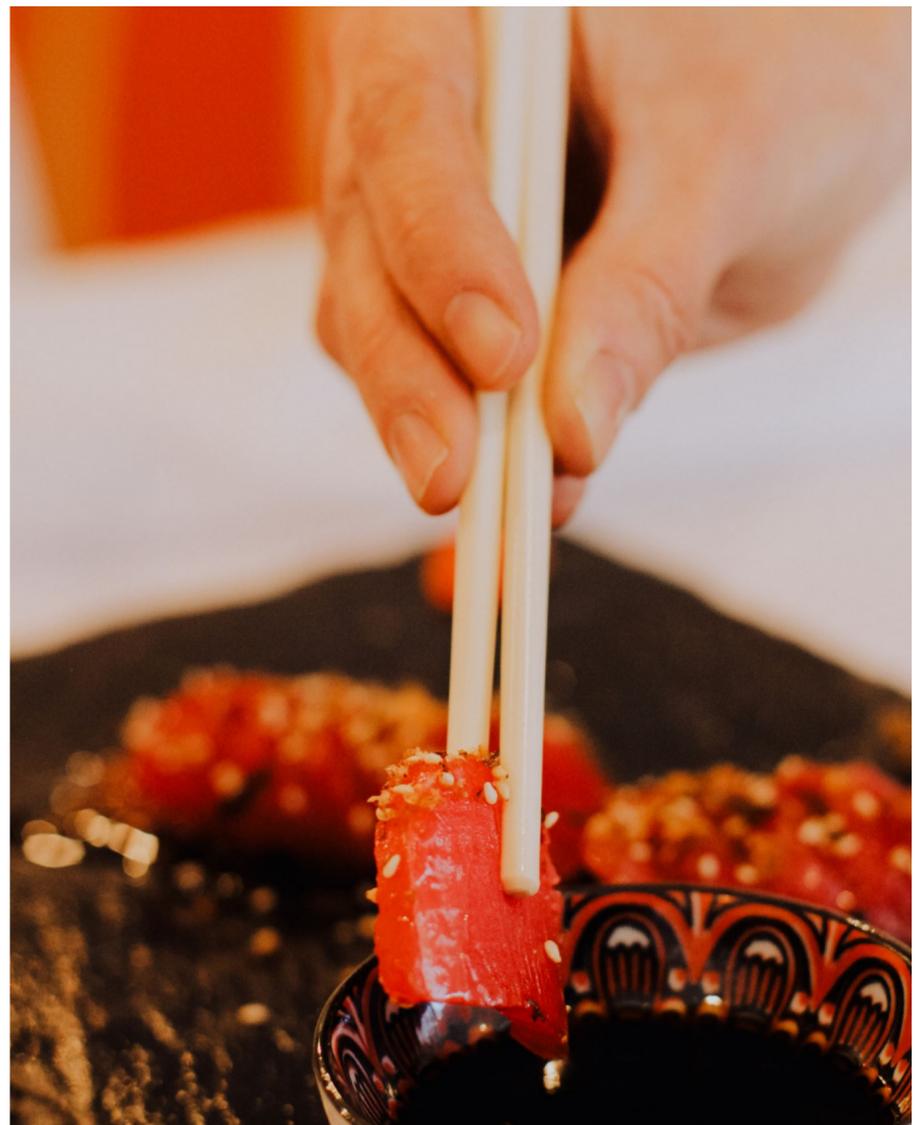
We started to provide takeaway, which was actually great for us, as it introduced us to some new customers. Many have since gone on to become regulars.

As you look to grow your business over the next few years, what support do you think would be most beneficial?

Support in providing staff, as this is now the biggest challenge we face. It's essential that there is training and funding for this. Also, publicity is very important!

If you had a crystal ball, and were looking to the future... what direction would you hope to see the Coast's hospitality industry go in five years' time?

With a better means of operating - for example, staffing solutions. You just cannot grow a business without good, experienced staff.



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