

The Sydney Morning Herald

ENTERTAINMENT

Woodfire smokes Bondi breakfast starters

By [Candice Chung](#)

Updated 12 September 2018 – 9:15am, first published 11 September 2018 – 5:26pm



Pacific Club Bondi

182 Campbell Parade, Bondi Beach, 9057 5775, thepacificclub.com.au

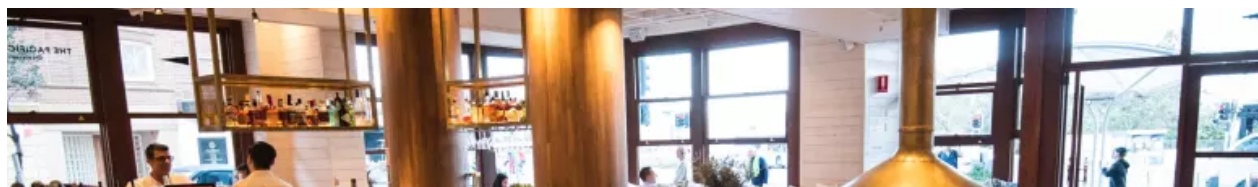


Wood-fired crumpets with wattleseed butter, white chocolate and honey.

Photo: Wolter Peeters

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THE LOWDOWN





Inside Pacific Club Bondi Beach.

Photo: Wolter Peeters

Main attraction: A down-to-earth woodfire-driven breakfast menu that features plenty of native ingredients and fun, campfire-inspired hits.

Must-try: Burnt orange and wattleseed porridge with caramelised banana. Embrace the last of the chilly mornings with this smoky and comforting breakfast dish.

Insta-worthy dish: Expect plenty of breakfast envy from the wattleseed crumpets served with a quenelle of white chocolate and house-cultured butter.

Drinks: \$3.5-\$5 for Pacific Club house blend coffee, \$5 for Ovvio or Warndu tea.

Prices: Breakfast \$14-\$23.

Hours: Mon-Sat 7am-11pm, Sun 7am-10pm

Thanks to restaurants like Lennox Hastie's Firedoor and Danielle Alvarez's Fred's, we've fallen pretty hard for woodfire cooking in recent years. From their kitchen's glowing hearths come sweetly charred dry-aged steaks, lamb legs slow-roasted a la facile or – across town at Mat Lindsay's Ester – potato bread so fluffy under its blistered skin that it makes you feel like every casual carbohydrate encounter has led you to this.

While those dishes may feel magical, they're also very much special occasion meals. So it's nice when former Byron Bay chef Bret Cameron comes along and throws breakfast into the whole woodfire routine.

Cameron, who hails from hatted Harvest Newrybar, has spent the last few years cooking with a 170-year-old oven in a weatherboard cottage. A reverse sea-change saw him moving from a sleepy coastal town to Sydney, heading up the kitchen in the month-old Pacific Club Bondi Beach.

Designed by the same team behind Mr Wong and Felix, Pacific Club is the kind of venue that wouldn't feel out of place in New York's Meatpacking District or downtown Los Angeles. It might take some chutzpah to swing open its brass-trimmed hardwood door for breakfast at eight in the morning; or feel at home among the marble topped tables and floating fireplace.

But let one of the friendly staff distract you with a smoky house-blend coffee (the restaurant roasts its own in Brisbane) and it's easy to relax into the somewhat surreal setting for Cameron's rustic, native produce-driven menu.

"A lot of chefs don't like cooking breakfast," says Cameron. "They kind of get over it or don't put as much love into it as they could. I want to make something different, so it's not just fun for people to eat, but also fun for us to cook."

By this, he means taking a campfire-inspired approach to some classic breakfast dishes. You'll see "egg in a hole" – a slice of Textbook Patisserie focaccia with its bread heart swapped for a just-set sunny-side-up egg. Served with streaky bacon and a spicy kangaroo and bush tomato sausage from the grill, it's a clever use of the woodfire that hits you with a pang of outdoor nostalgia.

Brace yourself for Cameron's fiery hot sauce made with blitzed up fermented chilli and vinegar, zigzagged generously on toast.

Not all dishes get equal fire-time. While jaffles are cooked until golden over coal in cast-iron pans, something like the crumpets might be barely smoke-kissed. The spongy discs, sourced from a baker at Carriageworks markets, are dusted with wattleseeds and served with a quenelle of white chocolate mousse. It seems a shame not to make the crumpets on-site. But the accompanying cultured wattleseed beurre noisette is so good that all is forgiven with the first coat of the nutty spread.

A more technically driven dish is the burnt orange and wattleseed porridge. Here, a citrusy smokiness comes from blackening oranges on charcoal. Cameron then adds pecans and blends the fruit into a puree, before folding it into the porridge mix. Finished with maple syrup and caramelised banana, it's surprisingly complex and comforting.

For a carb variation, try the PC Nasi, a vegetarian nasi goreng fragrant with turmeric, oven baked pumpkin, chilli jam and a soft-boiled egg. Meat eaters can add a fillet of house-cured trout that's been cold smoked over paperbark, or return for lunch or dinner for more classic protein hits.

From a down-to-earth approach to wood-fired food, to the focus on native, sustainably-sourced ingredients, there's plenty to love in Cameron's thoughtful menu.

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

SIDEROOM

180-186 Campbell Parade, Bondi Beach

From the people behind Potts Point's popular Room 10 cafe is this blink-and-you'll miss it outpost in Bondi. The menu here is similar to the inner city mothership, making it a good hack to get your favourite Room 10 sandwiches (think smokey brisket on Brickfields bread), minus the queue.

SHUK

2 Mitchell Street, North Bondi

This sun-drenched cafe has been serving delicious Israeli treats since owners Yoni Kalfus, Erez Beker and Ariel Hefe transformed it from a corner store a few years back. Beloved for their

shakshuka and teff pancakes, you'll leave with a full stomach and a house-baked pastry in hand.

SATURDAYS NYC BONDI BEACH

L08/ Bondi Beach, Entry via Gould St, 180-186 Campbell Parade, Bondi Beach

Stylish, minimalist menswear stores can be hard to come by, especially one that serves Artificer coffee in-store. This NYC brand made its name as a downtown surfwear shop before expanding into a laid-back, everyday collection. Come for the clothes and stay for the excellent brew.

WELLINGTON CAKE SHOP

157 Bondi Road, Bondi

If you haven't visited a Hungarian bakery, let pastry chef Leslie Brull improve your life with his layered cakes, cheese-filled strudels and their signature kuglóf (chocolate drizzled, ring-shaped cake). There's a reason this bakery's been embraced by locals since since 1979.



Candice Chung



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