



e'cco bistro

WORDS: KERRYN RAMSEY

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRISTOPHER FREDERICK JONES

When a basement space under e'cco bistro in Brisbane became available, the restaurateur hired David Gole of Riddel Architecture to design an intimate wine bar

Philip Johnson [restaurateur/chef] had been considering adding a wine bar to e'cco bistro for quite a few years. We actually did an earlier scheme for a much larger bar but when Easton Pearson [a fashion boutique below the restaurant] closed, it provided a great opportunity. The wine bar seats 20 to 40 patrons so it's very intimate; it feels a little like sitting in a living room.

The project started last August and was completed in October. The location on Adelaide Street [in Brisbane] provides a separate entry to the bar from the restaurant above. We worked closely with Philip; he's very hands-on. He saw an opportunity—and a need—for the bar to double as a private function space. Since it opened, it's been really popular.

We designed a U-shaped bar so two staff can work efficiently, even in busy periods, and a separate wash-up area at one end. Connection to the existing restaurant back-of-house was also needed for servicing requirements. We didn't need to accommodate a kitchen—it's all done from the bistro upstairs.

As a visual effect, we used lots of mirrors to display the wines and to give the space a sense of depth. Built-in wine fridges were installed, and we designed other display areas for glasses, beers and spirits.

The building was an old tea warehouse so we expressed all the lovely materials—big timber beams and posts, a concrete floor and exposed brickwork that was painted. We just had to introduce the Queensland red cedar timber for all the joinery. The ceiling was reworked because we needed insulation from noise between the bar and the restaurant. We chose Ecophon acoustic ceiling tiles [www.ecophon-international.com], which helps minimise the sound. We added circular light fittings on the walls, just as we did 13 years ago in the restaurant upstairs. We reinvented the look by designing a bronzed mirror with the light fitting behind. It was also important to get subdued lighting in the wine bar so we

selected the energy-efficient T5 dimmable fluoro lights from Light And Design Group [www.ladgroup.com.au].

e'cco's signature colour scheme—neutral tones with feature walls of crimson—is timeless and very much connected with food and wine. We introduced more colour accents, such as the built-in banquette seating with upholstery of chocolate-brown leather.

We needed to make the space flexible to accommodate different scenarios. We custom-made small bar tables, which have a Queensland red cedar base and stone tops. The 'Athena' stools have classic round seats, while the 'Flow' plywood chairs—all from Stylecraft [www.stylecraft.com.au]—are stained a dark brown-black. All these pieces link together, creating an understated elegance." ○

Riddel Architecture

7 Diddams Lane
 Brisbane QLD 4000
 Tel: (07) 3831 4155
 Fax: (07) 3831 4150
 www.rara.net.au