



New look a winner for Freemans Dining Room

Kelly Deeks

A new extended bar for Lyttelton's Freemans Dining Room has won its architect Nic Curragh of Objects Ltd the regional commercial interior award at the Architectural Designers New Zealand Architectural Design Awards 2016.

Nic helped the business get back up and running following the Christchurch earthquakes, reconfiguring the dining area with different sized seating arrangements and providing a key architectural feature with a bespoke and highly handcrafted operable cedar louvre wall.

In 2015, owners Nick and Sarah Freeman called him back to help them extend their bar and incorporate a couple of new directions the restaurant was heading in, with a small scale coffee roaster and wine on tap.

Choosing their architect came down to Freemans Dining Room's philosophy of establishing and maintaining good relationships.

"Our philosophy allows us to have really strong connections with our suppliers, our customers, and our employees," she says.

"Anyone that works for us, with us, or dines with us, it's a relationship that's ongoing. Nic knew our jobs and understood our needs, and was the perfect person to do it.

"We got everything planned down to the last detail, and in November 2015, we closed on the Monday and reopened on the Wednesday night. It was very stressful, but when you've already been through an earthquake, you think you will be fine!"

The new bar now houses Freemans Dining Room's coffee roaster, on display for all the

customers to see. Sarah says the more the business can do for itself the better, and the more control it has over its product.

"We make our own bread and ice cream, and we grow our own veggies on our property at home," she says.

"We put a real emphasis on being connected to what we do, and roasting our beans was a natural progression. Our team is really excited about it too. All of a sudden they're in control of a product we're serving."

Freemans Dining Room has a specialised style of roasting and is now moving into branding its own coffee.

The new bar also includes Millcrest sauvignon blanc and Peregrine pinot noir on tap.

Sarah says the move has made wine more accessible to her customers.

"If someone's not sure what to have, we can let them have a taste and all of a sudden a dialogue opens up. It really helps us to link back to our customers more."

Wine on tap is also a more sustainable option from a business perspective, with a significant amount of less wastage than bottled wine, and of course no empty bottles going into the bin.

Sarah says the team at Freemans Dining Room are committed to making the experience as special as they can for their patrons.

"There is something quite special about walking into a restaurant and the person serving you really wants to look after you and take all of your worries of the day away," she says.

"From our point of view, there is something lovely about customers coming up after their meal and saying they had such a great time."



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