



nice HOTEL & BISTRO

A Daily News Advertising Feature

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REBORN: Landscaping with a Taranaki flavour has detailed the already striking frontage of the Terry Parkes' and Chris Herlihy's nice hotel & bistro in New Plymouth.



STYLE-SETTER: The main dining area of the nice hotel & bistro opens to a garden deck.

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Nice Bistro

Relish the style, wit and charm of Nice Bistro, where food is to be enjoyed and the wine savoured. Nice Bistro offers two private dining rooms and a range of menus for all occasions. Open to guests and casual diners, Monday to Saturday from 4pm to 9pm. High tea and luncheon on Sunday from 11am until 4pm.

Luxury sits well with informality

Feature: MIKE SHAW
Photos: PIP GUTHRIE

IT'S been 20 years or so in the making but Terry Parkes and Chris Herlihy have finally opened their 'nice hotel & bistro' in New Plymouth. The beginnings lie back when the pair were working in the restaurant at the then Westown Motor Hotel. They talked of ideas about how they would run a hotel.

Careers then took off in different directions: clothing and cuisine for Terry and a corporate move for Chris. When old friends get back together, the past often comes back into focus. And it was reminiscing on those days at the Westown Hotel that brought back the dreams of a luxury hotel.

"Let's do a hotel like we always talked about 20 years ago," was their response. The memories inspired them again. It also helped that Terry owned the perfect building in which to see their dream come to fruition - an historic residence at the corner of Vivian St and Brougham St.

It seems, like a good wine, the concept improved with age and travel had further improved the final flavour. "We'd both travelled and got ideas and colours and the little things that added to what we wanted to do," explained Terry. "It meant grabbing all that and whizzing it around and putting it together with a New Plymouth flavour". That local flavour shows through strongly in the



HOTELIERS: Chris Herlihy and Terry Parkes.

image they have created with architect Paul Goldsmith's help.

A unique original frontage already gave the building a striking appearance and the landscaping of rocks and cabbage trees added a west coast Taranaki touch. Corrugated iron cladding at the rear of the building was another element drawn from the Taranaki environment.

With the outside planning complete, the pair set about transforming the interior. Weeks of work saw the creation of six double bedrooms with luxury ensuites upstairs, and private dining rooms, kitchen, the main bistro area, a deck for outdoor entertainment and relaxation and the detailing of a refined eclectic atmosphere downstairs.

It's been a major makeover for the gracious old home but less traumatic than it might have been, says Chris. "Many of the rooms fitted into the existing spaces," he said.

Chris says the work has brought the building from the 1860s into 2000 in a way that seems to have fulfilled its destiny. "When we finished it felt like the place said 'At last, this is what I'm here for.'"

A supportive approach by New Plymouth District Council staff helped the project along, they acknowledge. "Without that, this might not have happened," said Terry. "The council recognised the credibility of the project."

The transformation has been readily appreciated by people around New Plymouth, a satisfyingly good number sitting down to a meal or drink at the nice hotel & bistro in its first eight weeks of operation. Among them have been many ex-patients of former owner Dr Walker.

That response has more than justified the confidence Terry and Chris had in their venture. "It's gone beyond our expectations," said Terry. "Sometimes we've been so busy we've had to slow down bookings."

They do that to ensure the dining experience at their bistro is rewarding. "We're not a banquet hall," Terry emphasised. A look around at the intimate interior of the building reinforces that comment. It's opulent as well as intimate and actually more opulent than

Continued p7

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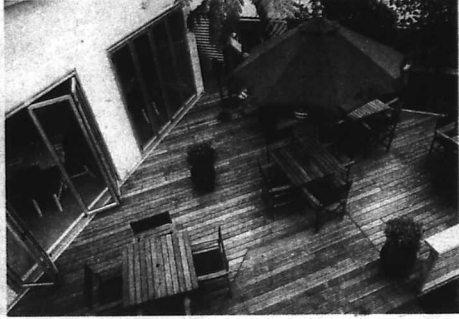
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NICE HOTEL & BISTRO

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ROOM WITH A VIEW: The Gallery Suite at the nice hotel & bistro.

ON HIGH: Looking down on the garden deck from the Gallery Room.

□ From page 6

Terry and Chris intended. "When we opened, it was suggested it's too opulent for the service we have here," said Terry. "Not so, they say now."

"They are lavish surroundings," admits Chris, "but the service is informal and friendly. People can come in here and experience a really nice atmosphere without the traditional formality associated with it. Although we are trained in silver service and formality, we find people appreciating the greater relaxation of our presentation." "People can come in here, start with an antipasto and a glass of wine, and enjoy the company of friends without rushing into their meal," said Terry. "Or they can call in and savour a scallop and chicken morn roll and a glass of chardonnay on the deck in our tropical garden."

Expect to be challenged by the variety of menu items. And if you don't know what something is, Terry is pleased to be asked. "We want people to ask 'What's non?' or 'What's tapenade?'" he said. "Either or both Terry and Chris will usually be on hand to answer any questions, relishing the personal rapport with their guests. "We do the waitering ourselves," explained Terry.

With their backgrounds in the district, that means the pair often know the guests sitting down to a meal, a familiarity they enjoy. "It's like having people around for dinner... except they pay," Terry quipped. Terry and Chris expect a growing number of outside visitors to be attracted by the luxury accommodation.

An example is in the recent visit of four Japanese tourists who flew in from Papanui on the east coast where it was raining. The chance of a sunny west coast stay brought them to New Plymouth and the nice hotel & bistro.

That visit showed the benefits the new hotel could bring to the city through its unique attractions, Chris said. "It's a top accommodation venue in its field. There's nothing else like it in Taranaki and relatively few like it outside Taranaki."

"We are actually attracting people to New Plymouth now who would not otherwise come here. That helps New Plymouth, the local economy and other restaurants and businesses."

"New Plymouth is as good as it gets in the regions," Terry added. "We feel there's a future here and in our commitment to this project, we've put our money where our mouths are, making sure we used local contractors, suppliers and retail businesses where we could."

The ready acceptance of the nice hotel & bistro in the city is also due to the support of their very able staff, say Terry and Chris.

As an introductory special and to celebrate the initial enthusiasm of the local market to their opening, the pair are offering special prices for luxury weekends for two at the nice hotel & bistro for the month of September, subject to availability.



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Pictured: Pauline Lockett, Terry Parkes and Chris Herlihy
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Terry Parkes and Chris Herlihy, Nicehotel, Taranaki.
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