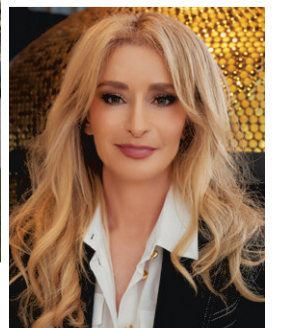


Sydneysiders, foodie heaven is only a day trip away



THE OWNER OF LAKE MACQUARIE HOTSPOT 8 AT TRINITY IS DETERMINED TO PUT THE REGION ON THE MAP WITH A SHOWSTOPPING MENU AND SPECTACULAR WATERFRONT VIEWS – AND HER VISION IS PAYING OFF.



Natalie Johnson,
managing director
of 8 at Trinity

On a chilly Saturday earlier this winter, a dozen friends from Sydney's Coogee Beach piled into a limousine and made the 90-minute trip north to Lake Macquarie, lured by the bountiful seafood platters and creative cocktails they'd seen on Instagram. Their destination: 8 at Trinity, a dazzling 350-seat establishment adjacent to a new marina on the lake's shores.

For Natalie Johnson, managing director of 8 at Trinity, it was proof of what she'd always known – that her restaurant is a true destination, a culinary field of dreams where you can come for the finest wagyu Tomahawk or enjoy a simple Margherita pizza and be assured of experiencing an exceptional meal in a world-class waterfront setting.

A (very) worthwhile journey

For a long time, however, there weren't too many people who saw eye-to-eye with Johnson's vision.

"Everybody was laughing at me while I was building the restaurant. I mean, everybody – even the guys who were building the deck that sits over 350 people were laughing at me saying, 'Honey, aren't you a bit ambitious? You'll

be lucky to get 50 people here!'"

Now serving 1000 patrons a day, Thursday to Sunday, Johnson's courage has clearly paid off. But if it was a gamble, it was an educated one. With a background in managing large property developments, as well as having owned and run three successful restaurants in the past, Johnson knew what she was doing.

What's more, 8 at Trinity is only a small part of a 23-hectare \$550-million project her husband Keith Johnson is developing on the site.

For all its glittering facade, elegant interiors and outstanding service, the restaurant is actually a pop-up, destined to transition into a luxury waterside hotel, apartment and dining precinct within a few years. As

a proof of concept, 8 at Trinity has given patrons a taste for what's to come and the Johnsons valuable insight into what they'll need to bring the rest of their vision to life.

"We wanted people to see, feel and believe in what we are about to build," Johnson explains. "I also wanted to know what infrastructure we needed to operate [a restaurant] at that scale."

A showstopping menu

In its current iteration, 8 at Trinity may not be here for a long time, but it's most certainly here for a good time.

The menu is, by Johnson's own admission, extensive.

"It's like the Bible," she laughs.

"I need to give people what they want, so [families] feel like they can come here with their kids and order a pizza or businessmen [can arrive by] helicopter to enjoy a Grange and a Tomahawk"

A common thread running through each dish is Johnson's commitment to sourcing the finest local produce to complement a cosmopolitan approach to flavour. The A5 Kagoshima Wagyu, for example, has an MBS12+ and is a true headline dish.

Other crowd favourites include the Singapore chilli prawns and the exquisite Hong Kong-style whole lobster served with handmade egg noodles. Or, for a sunny weekend lunch, it's hard to beat the fresh kingfish ceviche with finger lime, yuzu and smoky avruga caviar.

The wine list is equally extensive, tilting towards the homegrown but with a generous representation from France, Italy and Germany.

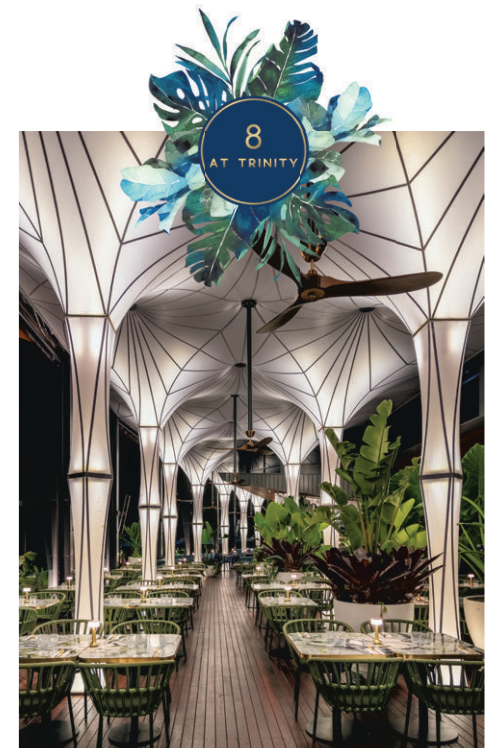
Cocktails fill a menu of their own, ranging

from classics to flamboyant signatures such as the Smoking Gun (dramatically served in a smoke-filled cloche) and the extraordinary Golden Cadillac Margarita – the ultimate gilt-y pleasure.

Johnson is acutely aware of delivering a showstopping dining experience and each element of 8 at Trinity has been hand-selected as the best in its class.

"I have to try harder than everybody else," she says. "It's the only way people will get in the car and drive for an hour and a half to get here."

As the convoy of discerning diners heading north will attest, it's an approach that's clearly working and it's put Lake Macquarie on the map.



Book today at 8attrinitypoint.com.au