Summer and winter, for lunch, dinner, a snack or drinks, you can sit on the footpath at a table with a crisp white tablecloth. It’s always been that way… It is a place for everyone, from millionaires to the stony broke, and all walks of life have always been welcome. It is in this way that S.P.Q.R. has become a barometer of the city. . .’

Legendary Ponsonby restaurant S.P.Q.R has been a magnet for Auckland diners for more than 20 years. With its colourful atmosphere and sun-bathed pavement tables, there really is no other restaurant quite like it. The S.P.Q.R cookbook shares more than 85 dishes from the restaurant menu, all carefully translated and tested for the home cook. Some of the recipes included in this cookbook have been on the restaurant’s menu since it opened – there would be an outcry if they were ever taken off! The recipes follow S.P.Q.R’s Italian-inspired menu, including elegant primi piatti (entrees), insalate (salads), casual platters, pasta, pizza and riso, favourite seafood and meat secondi (mains), and stunning dolci (desserts), as well as basics, sauces and stocks.

Photographer Tamara West captures the unique atmosphere of this landmark restaurant and bar. Writer Simon Farrell-Green introduces the S.P.Q.R story, paying tribute to the contribution this unique eatery has made to Auckland’s dining scene.

S.P.Q.R’s owner, Chris Rupe, is humble about the restaurant’s success. But he acknowledges there are many reasons for its iconic status.

‘The local community have supported us from day one – they are the heroes, along with the staff. We’re like a family here and several of us have been working at S.P.Q.R for 15 years or more.’

‘S.P.Q.R is ever-evolving. I travel a lot to see what is working well in other parts of the world. We keep the best of the old and bring in new ideas all the time.’

‘At S.P.Q.R we are passionate about the detail. We know that from the moment a diner steps through the door they are in charge. It’s about exercising judgement and being perceptive to the needs of every single customer. Most of all, we believe in generosity.’

For an interview with Chris Rupe, a review copy, for recipe extracts or for further information please contact: Penny Hartill, hPR

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