BROOKLYN’S FINEST
Old becomes new again as a former factory in Williamsburg is reimagined as a hip boutique hotel and restaurant.

PHOTOGRAPHS LUCAS ALLEN  WORDS CARLI PHILIPS
The recipe for Brooklyn’s hippest new hotel, the Wythe, and its wood-fired restaurant, Reynards, came from developer Jed Walentas, hotelier Peter Lawrence and celebrated New York restaurateur Andrew Tarlow. Their five-year dream came to fruition with the recent launch of the boutique 72-room hotel on the Williamsburg waterfront.

The taste-making trio stripped bare the red-brick factory, a former 1900s cooperage, with the help of Morris Adjmi Architects. The skeleton was left intact, with original masonry, pine beams, arched windows and cast-iron columns. “We wanted the food to be a reflection of the space,” says Andrew, who is renowned for local establishments, Marlow & Daughters, Marlow & Sons, Diner, and Roman’s.

“The room is quite spacious and elegant, but with rustic characteristics that came from the building’s past as a factory — high ceilings, beautiful exposed brick, big windows with great natural light, and large wood and steel beams running through it.” Wythe Hotel pays homage to Brooklyn’s roots by inserting “a new function into an old building while retaining the original charm”, says co-owner and Aussie expat Peter Lawrence.

The loft-like restaurant reflects the area’s current artisanal and past industrial spirit and is the result of a collaborative effort by various local creatives: designers Workstead, cabinetmaker Dave Holler, SAW Furniture, and Flavor Paper who created wallpaper for the rooms. Local craftspeople are also credited with sourcing and customising everything from the lighting to the apple-green trash cans.

An early pioneer of the farm-to-table concept, Andrew’s menu is consistent with his philosophy of using only the freshest, seasonal and best-quality local produce. “We change our dishes as much as the availability of ingredients allows, which keeps our chefs engaged and inspired to try new things.” An open kitchen lets patrons be close to the food preparation, just as in someone’s home. “We wanted the hotel and restaurant to be like one big house,” says Andrew.

For more go to wythehotel.com.
GRILLED NETTLE TOAST

SERVES 4
4 cups stinging nettles, stemmed (use gloves to do this)
Extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon wholegrain mustard
60ml (¼ cup) crème fraîche
4 slices sourdough bread, toasted
75g firm sheep’s milk or parmesan cheese, finely grated
¾ bunch fresh thyme, leaves picked
Squeeze of fresh lemon juice

1. Lightly season the stinging nettles with olive oil, salt and freshly ground pepper and grill over open wood coals (or, alternatively, on a hot chargrill pan). Finely chop the nettles, transfer to a medium-sized bowl, then fold in the mustard and crème fraîche.
2. Preheat grill to high. Spread the toasted bread with the nettle mixture, then sprinkle some of the cheese over the top. Grill until golden. Remove, cut toast into halves and grate a little extra fresh cheese on top.
3. Garnish with fresh thyme, a squeeze of lemon and some freshly cracked black pepper. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and serve immediately.

POT DE CRÈME WITH LAVENDER AND LEMON MERINGUE

MAKES 4
POT DE CRÈME
450ml thin cream
90g licorice fern sugar*
8 egg yolks

LAVENDER MERINGUE
150g egg whites (approximately 4)
150g caster sugar
150g icing sugar
15g lavender sugar*

LEMON MERINGUE
75g egg whites (approximately 2)
150g caster sugar
30g lemon curd

1. Preheat oven to 150°C or 130°C fan forced. Place cream and sugar in a saucepan over a medium heat and bring almost to boiling point.
2. Meanwhile, whisk egg yolks together, add hot cream mixture and whisk until well combined. Scoop any excess foam off the surface of the mixture and discard.
3. Place a x 350ml ovenproof ramekins in a deep roasting tray. Strain mixture into a jug, then divide among ramekins. Pour boiling water into pan to come halfway up the sides of the ramekins.
4. Place in a preheated oven and bake for 30–35 minutes or until custards still wobble slightly in the centre. Remove ramekins from water bath. Set aside to cool, then cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate overnight.
5. To make the lavender meringue, preheat oven to 110°C or 90°C fan forced, line a large baking tray with baking paper. Beat egg whites with electric beaters until foamy. Gradually add the sugar, one spoonful at a time. Once sugar is incorporated and dissolved, continue beating until glossy, stiff peaks form. Gently fold in the icing sugar and lavender sugar. Spread meringue evenly on a prepared tray in rectangles, approximately 6cm x 12cm. Bake for 2 hours, then turn off oven and leave overnight.
6. To make the lemon meringue, place egg whites and sugar in a bowl over a pan of simmering water, ensuring the base of the bowl does not touch the water. Whisk mixture constantly until it reaches 63°C on a sugar thermometer. Remove from heat, beat mixture with electric beaters until cool. Gently fold in lemon curd.
7. To serve, bring custards to room temperature. Spread a little lemon meringue on top of lavender meringue rectangles, and place one meringue on top of each custard.
8. If unable to find licorice fern sugar, substitute caster sugar with a few drops of licorice extract. For lavender sugar, add 1 tablespoon dried lavender buds to 1 cup white sugar.
BEEF TARTARE WITH GRILLED OYSTER
SERVES 4
4 oysters, unshucked
500g grass-fed beef rump steak, sinew removed
2 tablespoon finely chopped French shallots
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Squeeze of lemon juice, to taste
1 teaspoon bay salted capers, rinsed, drained, finely chopped
Pinch of cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons thinly sliced chives
4 egg yolks

1. Set oysters over hot coals (or alternatively sit on a medium hot chargrill pan) and grill until shells pop open, about 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, cut rump steak into very small dice. Place beef and all remaining ingredients in a large mixing bowl and stir until well combined. The consistency should be slightly creamy with a nice emulsification of egg, Dijon mustard and oil. Taste, and add a little extra lemon or pepper if desired.
3. Serve a spoonful of tartare on each plate, and top with one grilled oyster. Serve with a small watercress or rocket salad (dressed with lemon and olive oil) and french fries, or sliced baguette.

HOUSE-SMOCKED WHISKY PECAN PIE WITH WHISKY CARAMEL SAUCE
MAKES 8
SABLE CRUST
250g plain flour
130g caster sugar
35g cocoa powder
85g almond meal
3g salt
160g unsalted butter, diced
2 large egg yolks

PECAN PIE FILLING
340g blackstrap molasses
165g dark brown sugar
60g melted brown butter
123g corn syrup
¾ teaspoon salt
3 large eggs
1 vanilla bean, seeds scraped
110ml bourbon
390g smoked pecans, roughly chopped

WHISKY CARAMEL
130g caster sugar
60g whisky
1 vanilla bean, split

CANDIED NUTS
260g chopped smoked pecans
60g caster sugar

ICE-CREAM
480g thin cream
480ml milk
9 egg yolks
210g caster sugar

1. To make the sable crust, combine flour, sugar, cocoa, almond meal, salt and butter in a food processor until mixture resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add egg yolks and pulse until the dough comes together, adding a few drops of chilled water if necessary. Turn out onto a lightly floured work surface and knead for 1-2 minutes, or until dough comes together. Divide dough in half and shape each portion into a disc. Cover with plastic wrap, refrigerate for 15 minutes.
2. Roll out one portion of dough to 3mm thick. Cut out 4 x 13cm rounds, re-rolling the pastry if necessary. Line 4 x 8cm loose-based flan tins and trim the edges. Repeat with remaining dough. Transfer to a baking tray, freeze for 20 minutes.
3. Preheat oven to 200°C. Bake pastry cases for 30 minutes or until cooked.
4. Reduce oven temperature to 180°C. To make the filling, combine molasses, sugar, brown butter, corn syrup and salt in a bowl. Whisk in eggs, vanilla and bourbon. Stir through pecan nuts. Carefully divide the filling among the tart shells, return to oven and bake for 30 minutes, or until filling is puffed and set. Remove and set aside to cool.
5. Meanwhile, to make the whisky caramel, place sugar and 30ml water in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Cook, stirring, until sugar has dissolved. Then simmer, without stirring, until syrup reaches 160°C on a sugar thermometer (firm ball stage). Add warm nuts to syrup, stir to coat, then return nuts to baking tray and bake for 5-7 minutes, or until golden. Cool.
6. To make the candied nuts, preheat oven to 180°C. Place nuts on a baking tray and warm in oven for 2-3 minutes. Place sugar and 30ml water in a saucepan over a medium heat. Cook, stirring, until sugar has dissolved. Then simmer, without stirring, until syrup reaches 160°C on a sugar thermometer (firm ball stage). Add warm nuts to syrup, stir to coat, then return nuts to baking tray and bake for 5-7 minutes, or until golden. Cool.
7. To serve, top each tart with a scoop of ice cream (recipe below), some candied nuts and a drizzle of whisky caramel.
8. To make brown butter, cook butter in a frying pan over medium heat until it foams, is brown and has a nutty aroma.

9. To make ice cream, heat cream and milk to scalding point in a saucepan.
10. Meanwhile, place egg yolks and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat until pale. Pour hot cream mixture over eggs and whisk to combine. Return mixture to a clean saucepan; place over low heat and cook, stirring, until mixture thickens and coats the back of a spoon (do not boil).
11. Pass mixture through a fine strainer, place in a bowl over an ice bath and chill completely. Churn in an ice-cream machine to manufacturer’s instructions.