



Brisbane's first affineur  
has moved from her  
garage to a new shop

## THE BIG CHEESE

DAIRY GOOD: Wendy  
Downes, affineur at The  
Cheeseboard, Picture:  
AAP/Claudia Baxter



**C**heese lovers who've visited France will have noticed the high quality of cheese presented by even tiny fromageries. And the excellence on show doesn't happen by accident. Behind every great cheese shop is an affineur – an expert whose job is to gracefully age each cheese so it can be savoured in perfect condition.

**Wendy Downes**, owner of new Stafford venture called The Cheeseboard, comes from a town planning background but has studied cheese making for a decade. She's also become the state's first affineur.

"I grew up in a rural area watching lots of businesses fail during the regulation of the dairy industry and became interested in cheese making because it's such a fabulous way of adding value," says Downes. While studying cheese she discovered the science/art of cheese affinage and felt she'd finally found a calling, taking a course at the Academie Opus Casseus at the maturing cellars of Mons in Saint-Haon-le-Châtel, Loire, France. When she returned to Brisbane she built a maturation cave (ageing cellar) in her Alderley garage and has worked with local cheesemakers ever since.

Now she's set up a small cheese retailer at Wolferhampton St, Stafford, sharing digs with a pretty florist-cafe called Soul Pantry.

Currently in the process of transferring her cave to the new location, she will offer cheese master-classes, plus a tightly curated line-up of nicely-aged local artisan cheese and accompaniments. A liquor licence is in the pipeline, so in the future cheese and wine/beer flights will also be on the menu.

Downes says she's keen to spread the message about Australian cheese and the increasing creativity of hardworking cheesemakers who are at last starting to trumpet what's unique about Australia.

This weekend check out cheesemakers plus a host of diverse local producers at Regional Flavours, South Bank – Brisbane's free food festival sponsored by *The Courier-Mail*. See [regionalflavours.com.au](http://regionalflavours.com.au)

### PINN DROPS FRESH VENTURE

The tireless **Nick Pinn** has another new venue in the works. Pinn, who's jointly responsible for a string of popular projects – ranging from Albion's Vaquero Dining to Malt Dining, Brisbane and Malt Pier Newstead – is teaming up with chef **Paul Hoffman** (ex-Cru Bar & Cellar, Sixes and Sevens, Fortitude Valley) for this new salvo.

The project is called Drum and the 90-seater is due to debut at Newstead in October, with locavore Cafe 360 as its neighbour.

"It will be all about less-is-more, casual-style dining with an extensive drinks offer," says Pinn, who wants Drum to have a relaxed local feel, serving high-quality affordable offerings. "There are a lot of

burger and pizza and pasta-type places out there – we're not interested in that. The focus here will be on quality and keeping the price point down, so people can come regularly."

Hoffman will be in the kitchen and his Hoffa's Nuts will also feature on the bar menu. "Paul's food is European – not comfort food – but it's approachable and relaxed," says Pinn. "He's well known in the area." The aim is to create a venue where people can drop in for cheese, a chat and a glass of wine, or linger over dinner.

### WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

Woolloongabba's loss is Camp Hill's gain, with the Woolloongabba Antique Centre upping sticks and heading for an epic new home on the site of the old Planet Theatre on Old Cleveland Rd. Co-owner **Sarah Jane Walsh** and partner **Paul Butler** are aiming to kick-off on Saturday, August 12.

"We'll literally close the doors at Woolloongabba

on Friday and open at Camp Hill on Saturday," says Walsh, who's now cleaning and painting the new digs. The space offers around the same floor area as the Gabba but will be home to a bigger and better eatery called Tart Cafe. The cafe will have a full service kitchen and feature between 80-90 seats. It will be licensed serving breakfast and lunch, with the focus on fresh and healthy fare.

"We'll play on the fact that it's the old Planet Theatre and have a Planet Burger, but also things like a crisp-skinned fish of the day with tomato, capers, olives and butter," says Walsh. A decadent chocolate tart called Sophia Loren will also be a signature. Chefs are being recruited and Walsh says the aim is to make everything in-house, except their gluten-free cakes. Campos coffee will be on pour.

### SELL SETS SIGHTS ON NOOSA

Executive chef **Chris Sell**, part-owner of NKB Group – the outfit behind Fortitude Valley's Nickel Kitchen &