

# Greeks bear gourmet gifts

## Kouzina Modern Greek and Meze Bar

**ADDRESS:** Shop 1009,  
Robina Promenade, Robina  
Town Centre

**PHONE:** 5578 9800

**W**ITH his heart and heritage lying in the sun-soaked Mediterranean, Theo Kostoglou was destined to fall for the Gold Coast. "It's the sun, the hot climate, the lifestyle – I can't help but love it here," says the Australian-born Greek chef, who confesses to a more personal motivation behind Kouzina's sea change.

Theo trained and has family in Kos, known for its tourist-enticing golden beaches and balmy weather. While it was in Melbourne he and wife Sharelle built their empire of four Kouzina restaurants, the parallels between his Mediterranean idyll and our souvlaki-starved shores proved too hard to ignore.

"This is the perfect place to enjoy Mediterranean food," says Theo, who made his mark in Melbourne giving the Hellenic classics a modern, playful tweak.

Refined on the cutting edge of critical southern taste buds, Kouzina's exciting menu has what it takes to set the standard on the Gold Coast.

Restaurant manager Roxanne Meik explains that it can be enjoyed in traditional a la carte style or grazing-friendly portions.

Unable to resist the prospect of a table overflowing with food, we opt to forgo mains in favour of trying as many of the meze dishes – the little dishes of Greece – as possible.

Drinks are the first order of business though, and my partner is intrigued by the Greek beers.

He gives boutique brew Athens Lager the nod for its distinctive, bitter edge.

A smiling staff member arrives with a chilled glass of wine for me, pronouncing the Boutari Assyrtiko Santorini with aplomb, followed by a cheerful admission he'd been practising so he could do just that.

His warmth and enthusiasm is typical of the staff here.

Remarkably for a restaurant that



Modern meze represents the ultimate in Greek chic

had been open only a few days at the time of our visit, there's not an order overlooked, dish inconsiderately timed or question about the menu left unanswered.

It's not long before our meze arrive and our waitress gets started on the jig-saw puzzle that is cramming the banquet on to our alfresco table.

The contemporary china's rather nice, so I assume a spot of plate smashing isn't an option.

The mixed, marinated collection of Greek olives, served warm, is perfect for picking at.

My partner's favourite is the lamb kebabs – full-flavoured, tender meat with a side of tzatziki.

Fresh, vibrant and summery – the scallops karpouzofeta should appeal to Gold Coast tastes.

Four crunchy discs of watermelon are topped with creamy circles of intensely flavoured feta and crowned with a velvety grilled scallop.

A splash of refreshing watermelon-mint vinaigrette further wakes up the palate.

The strips of salt and pepper calamari are buttery soft, best dipped in the little bowl of ouzo aioli. We also try the fava balls – Santorinan-style yellow lentil keftedes.

They have an earthy, textured taste that would be quite mild if it wasn't for the spicy bed of tomato and caper salsa.

At around the size of conventional entrees, each dish is generously proportioned and we're full before we even scratch the surface of the extensive selection.

On the list for return trips are blue-swimmer crab fritters; grilled kefalograviera cheese with green olive kebab, flambéed with Metaxa; spanakopita; dolmades; and South Australian king prawns wrapped in shredded filo pastry with harissa sauce.

I'm also keen to test Theo's lamb souvlaki, served with Greek salad, organo chips, pita and tzatziki, which he promises will live up to high expectations.

The dessert sampler for two takes us beyond baklava into utterly indulgent territory.

Unexpected but rewarding is the manouri mousse.

The sweet, creamy white cheese made from goats milk is whipped to a lighter consistency, scented with orange blossom and drizzled with a honey-syrup mixture strewn with toasted walnuts and fresh mint.

Even richer is the chocolate mousse, with a ganache-like shell and gossamer cap of Persian fairy floss.

The baklava is a lighter version of the classic, made with filo pastry, apricot, cashews and pistachios.

For shoppers and movie-goers previously on a 'do you want fries with that' diet, Kouzina and its neighbours on Robina Town Centre's Promenade are a blessing.

The restaurant serves lunch and dinner and doesn't close in between.

Visit on a Monday to sample the chef's favourite 10 meze dishes for \$20 a person.

For more information go to [www.kouzina.com.au](http://www.kouzina.com.au)

■ Chantay Logan



Owner and chef Theo Kostoglou



Restaurant manager Roxanne Meik looks in on the open kitchen