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Darleys

Timeless turn of the
century glamour

Darleys Restaurant

The recent refurbishment of Darleys Restaurant at Lillianfels Resort & Spa confirms it's identity as an opulent Blue Mountain icon.



Although the graceful house where Darleys sits is more than a century old, the building remains extensively intact with many original features still in place: stained glassed windows, grand fire places, crystal chandeliers and of course the wide windows framing the breathtaking views over verdant gardens through to Jamison Valley.

Architect Varney Parkes originally designed the property in the late 1800's for the restaurant's

namesake, Sir Fredrick Darley (Chief Justice and Lieutenant-Governor of New South Wales). It is said the site was built as a private summer residence for his family to enjoy the curative mountain air, especially daughter, Lilian who was ill with tuberculosis. Sadly she died before the building was complete. Eventually the family property was sold and converted into a luxury guesthouse.

Establishing a reputation as a place for luxury rest and recuperation the

guesthouse attracted people from British Royalty to Sydney-siders - often with doctor's orders, to enjoy the cheek-blushing fresh air.

None of that has changed for visitors today except that the beautiful house is now entirely dedicated to dining featuring two individually decorated private dining rooms adjoining the main dining room, sumptuous bar and a dedicated cigar room.



With crisp white linen, gold and black handcrafted wallpaper and custom detailed show plates, Darleys is unmistakably a fine dining setting. The sophisticated revamp created by Peter Reeves, of CRD Design, reflects the affluence and elegance of its period, enhanced by generous tables and superbly comfortable, specially commissioned dining chairs.

The preservation of charming details throughout Darleys evokes the ambiance of its bygone era. Each table, for example, is set with engraved antique silver napkin rings bearing the names of former diners. The dining room walls are lined with ornately framed paintings and photographs depicting historical vistas and dignitaries.

Wandering through the dining rooms into the bar, restaurant manager Jessica, points out the

small private balcony off to the side, explaining it was a special addition built for Queen Mary who used Darleys as her residence during her 1901 visit - the first of many royal visitors to come and enjoy the mountain beauty of Lillianfels.

The recent changes at Darleys extend beyond the dining room and into the kitchen with the appointment of a new head chef - multi-hatted and well-travelled, Lee Kwiez.

Although Lee sources premium produce from across Australia (WA black truffles, pheasant from Victoria, hand-picked crab meat from Queensland, ocean trout from Tasmania) local mountain providores are strongly represented on the menu.

Lee says he focuses on simplicity, innovation and loyalty to the quality

The Blue Mountain world heritage listing means Darleys is officially located in one of the most precious places on earth.

and flavours of the region to create his menus, making use of local vegetables; beef; olive oil; venison; bush mushrooms; olives; duck eggs and farmhouse cheeses.

Kwiez, who grew up in nearby East Kurrajong, says he is excited to join the impressive list of chefs engaged by Darleys. With his appointment well timed with the refurbishment

he is eager to lead the restaurant respectfully into a new era.

Such an opulent refurbishment and obvious commitment to indulgence might be considered a bold move in an industry experiencing tough times. However there is no denying anything less would have failed to honour the property's history and fallen short of the luxury expected of the highly regarded and award-winning restaurant.

In any case, it is doubtful anyone one will question it too deeply after a day of restorative mountain air, especially as they sink into the plush dining chairs under the gentle chandelier light and enjoy Kwiez's refined supper! ■

darleysrestaurant.com.au

Words Samantha Mackie
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Images above courtesy Darleys Restaurant

