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Photos/Patrick Neale

The personal touch

Next level approach to hospitality at White House

As we made our way to Te Puna on a Friday evening to enjoy dinner with friends at White House, I knew we'd be in for a treat as this is Jo and Penny's new restaurant. If you haven't yet had the pleasure to experience their extraordinary approach to hospitality, you are missing out. Trust me, it's next level.

The professionalism, attention to detail, and personal touch in all that Jo O'Keeffe and Penny Oxnam have presented over the years has been second to none. They are a tight team and experts at creating a warm, welcoming environment for everyone which they pair with scrumptious food and a superb selection of beverages.

Jo and Penny have lived and worked together for 29 years, been married for two, and together they have owned and managed several fantastic restaurants.

Diners will remember them as managers of Phil's Place at Tauranga Bridge Marina,

The private courtyard is a perfect and stylish setting to enjoy drinks and each other's company.



which was sold in May last year and has since rebranded.

The pair had been looking for a place to set up a new restaurant in the Te Puna area for a while, and when driving home one Sunday after a shift at Phil's Place, they spotted it. They went up to have a closer look and found out it was a show home.

"We met the owner Paul Williams that day, as he happened to be in his office. He really liked the idea of turning it into a

restaurant," Penny says.

"He suggested we'd put in resource consent to turn the rural house into a restaurant, and it all developed from there. A commercial kitchen was put in, the wardrobe became the bar, and we turned one of the bedrooms into a private dining area. Paul is really passionate about White House and we're all so happy with how it turned out."

Most of the fabulous staff from Phil's Place have joined Jo and Penny at White House.

With a long lease, a great landlord and an easy drive from their own Minden home, this is where Jo and Penny want to stay.

At just a few minutes from Tauranga off State Highway 2, the location of the restaurant is not only convenient, it is also stunning. White House sits on the hill away from the busy road, there is plenty of parking, and the restaurant is surrounded by beautiful gardens. You feel the love as soon as you enter the venue.

The private courtyard is a perfect and stylish setting to enjoy drinks and each other's company. You'd easily imagine yourself in France or Italy for a moment when you're surrounded by white roses and herb gardens.

A glass of Rive Della Chiesa Prosecco awaits me as we sit down and greet our friends.

I called Jo to tell her we were on our way, and she knows exactly what I like to drink. My friends were already enjoying a glass of beautiful Misty Cove Marlborough Pinot Gris and a cold Peroni beer.

Penny brought out a selection of appetisers, which included the homemade chicken liver pate served with toasted ciabatta, Dijon mustard, caramelised onions, gherkins and walnuts. The presentation was amazing, but it was off the plate and thoroughly enjoyed by us all in no time.



BAY BITES

Brian Kelly is breakfast host for Coast Tauranga 6am to 10 am weekdays

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