

TRAVEL

Sense of place

A heady mix of Bedouin, British Colonial and Brissie influences come together at Za Za Ta.

By Freya Herring Photographed by Tom Ferguson

Hotel restaurants must be one of the most challenging gigs in interior design. Somehow, in one space, a designer must create an environment befitting long lunches, indulgent special-occasion dinners and rambunctious late-night cocktail parties as well as rejuvenating and restorative breakfasts the morning after. Most of the time, hotel restaurants fit into one of these categories; rarely do they fit into them all.

Za Za Ta, the new restaurant at Ovolo's latest hotel in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley, seeks to serve all the moods the day throws at its guests. Designed by Luchetti Krelle, Za Za Ta is unlike anything the Sydney design firm has done before. Although you could never accuse Luchetti Krelle of sticking to a formula in projects, if you were to look for a common thread, it would be a sculptural kind of sleekness. Za Za Ta, comparatively, is a hyperbolic riot.

"Initially, we were inspired by Cluedo and the idea of a rambling house," says Rachel Luchetti, who runs the firm with Stuart Krelle. "So there's a conservatory, a grand hall, a library and a study."

When the Tel Aviv-inspired food concept emerged — ocean trout naye, cuttlefish fasolia, shakshuka — the existing aesthetic slotted neatly into place. "We altered it to be more of a harem," says Luchetti. "But the idea of abundance — so synonymous with the kibbutzim of Israel — is the same."

The kitchen opens up to one room, and the dining concept is a casual one. Eat standing up at high tables in the parlour or lounging on deep velvet sofas in the study — your choice. "We wanted to make it vibrant, alive and fun," says Luchetti. "As you go through, you discover new things."

Situated within a strikingly modern building, the spaces the designers have conjured feel like Federation-era Brisbane meets Europe's Grand Tour. If Oscar Wilde came to Brissie, this is where he'd come to eat. "When a building has character, you can go quite modern with it," says Luchetti. "But when a building lacks character, you have to bring it."



"Being here is like visiting a friend who is looking after you"

RACHEL LUCHETTI

THIS PAGE lined with custom wallpaper, the conservatory is an all-day dining room at Za Za Ta in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley.

OPPOSITE PAGE the harem, one of the connecting spaces between the Parlour Bar and the library.

Lush materials, such as dusky-toned velvets and marble, Persian-style rugs, custom furniture and vintage lighting, mash with local elements. "We were inspired by the quintessential Queenslander," she says. "So we've incorporated fretwork and used Federation tiles to demarcate zones."

A conservatory might sound like madness in the sweltering heat of a Queensland summer, but the design team wouldn't let that stop them. "It's perfectly appropriate for the Brisbane climate — we put the conservatory under the hotel," says Luchetti. "It's eclectic — there's ironwork furniture alongside Chippendale-style bamboo."

Unlike the hotel restaurant that often seems more corporate than convivial, Za Za Ta feels like a fabulous person's home. "It's this idea that you've gone round to someone's place and you're eating out of their kitchen, their dining room and their conservatory," says Luchetti. "Being here is like visiting a friend who is looking after you." **VL** ovolohotels.com.au/ovolothevalley/eat_luchettikrelle.com