

## **Visa Wellington On a Plate returns at Level 2 - 7 September, 2021**

### **A second helping of Visa Wellington On a Plate as culinary festival restarts in Level 2**

Those who are over home cooking will welcome the news that Visa Wellington On a Plate is serving up a second helping and restarting culinary festivities at Level 2 - albeit with mandatory scanning, masks and distanced dining, for the time being.

Festival events, Garage Project presents Burger Wellington and Cocktail Wellington presented by Tommy's will recommence from Wednesday, 8 September. Ticketed Festival events are in the process of planning new dates, where possible, with event organisers and iTICKET contacting ticket holders with updates, shortly. Festival ratings will also return at Level 2, with diners able to rate the burgers and cocktails they've tried on the Festival website.

Sarah Meikle, Festival Director and founder, says the plan is to now run the remainder of Visa Wellington On a Plate for up to four weeks from this Wednesday (8 September), depending on level changes, which could also potentially include a return to Level 1.

The scheduled four weeks will help to account for the reality that Festival venues will serve less people under Level 2 restrictions (limited to 50 per venue), however Ms. Meikle says the region's hospitality industry is well-versed when it comes to working to Covid-19 guidelines.

"Because Visa Wellington On a Plate works on a decentralised model, and the venues are throughout the region, we are fortunate the Festival can still run under Level 2 guidelines," she says.

"The hospitality industry has been here before - they are very nimble when it comes to accommodating those rules of separate, seated service and, now, ensuring diners are scanning in and masked up. Yes, it's challenging, but this is what has to be done to open doors again, as well as keeping diners safe and confident when dining out.

"Obviously, anything can change over the coming weeks, so we are monitoring the situation as it continues, and remaining flexible to accommodate any potential level changes, and making decisions in line with official Covid-19 announcements."

Visa Wellington On a Plate is one of the busiest times of the year for the capital's hospitality and produce industries. The latest national lockdown struck just as restaurants, eateries and bars around the Wellington region were right in the swing of the Southern Hemisphere's biggest culinary event, with two more weeks to go and five days into the hugely popular Burger Wellington component of the Festival.

The overwhelming majority of participating restaurants have decided to go forward with Festival events, burgers and cocktails at Level 2. At this stage, more than 90% of the remaining Festival events sessions are still scheduled to go ahead.

Raechal Ferguson, owner of Field & Green, said in the two weeks of the Festival that had taken place pre-lockdown, the restaurant was the busiest it had ever been with its pop-up event, Bar Salonika, with more than a thousand bookings for the remaining two weeks of the festival month. And it doesn't look like the lockdown had ruined diners' appetites for Visa Wellington On a Plate.

"Since the Level 2 announcement yesterday, bookings have been flying in every 20 seconds. We were prepared and ready to go. The mask wearing is the biggest change for us, but it was no surprise as this is what has been happening overseas. If that's what we need to do then that's what we need to do. This might be the new normal, and people are getting used to it," she says.

Ms Meikle called for diners to be patient and kind with the hospitality industry and Visa Wellington On a Plate Festival organisers as both worked to the perimeters of the latest government Level 2 announcement.

"Much like we are as festival organisers, the hospitality industry is planning and making decisions in line with the official Covid-19 announcements, so that message of being kind extends to these businesses as they get back into the swing of the festival. It has been an incredibly stressful time for them, so please be mindful as they accommodate the logistics of this new version of Level 2 as you're supporting your local cafes, restaurants and bars. Get out there, enjoy it safely - we are fortunate we can now go out and support our eateries."

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