

# First Look: In the Space of a Former Newtown Favourite, Margot Is Wellington's Cosy New Neighbourhood Local



Photo: Jacob Pietras

The intimate new bar and restaurant, which has taken up residence in the spot previously occupied by Mason, is helmed by a couple with experience at some of Wellington's most well-known venues such as The Bresolin, Ortega Fish Shack and Mighty Mighty. Head to the 26-seater for a warm welcome, wine and some rustic, seasonal European-inspired sharing plates.



For three years, Wellington bar and restaurant Mason was a popular fixture on a quiet side street in Newtown. When founder Matt Hawkes (ex-Rita) decided to shut up shop, it could have been a huge loss for the neighbourhood. Instead, while it's sad to see Mason go, the capital only stands to gain, with new venture Margot proudly taking its place.

Opening this week, Margot is helmed by Juno Miers and Tom Adam, who have worked in hospitality for 16 years. Tucked around a corner just off Newtown's main street, it has red and black curved window awnings and an intimate interior that wouldn't be out of place in a bustling European alleyway.

The feel inside is comfortable and homely, but thoughtfully designed. It's a cosy venue thanks to its small size, seating 26 in the main restaurant and 16 in the bar next door that they've also taken over from Mason (its easy-to-remember name "Next Door" has stayed).

"Margot is that loveable aunt that drinks and entertains a lot – she's fashionable, slightly eccentric but also warm and relatable," Miers tells *Broadsheet*. (The name of the restaurant is also a nod to one of their favourite chefs, London-based New Zealander Margot Henderson of acclaimed Shoreditch restaurant Rochelle Canteen.)

Miers and Adam both got into the industry young. Between them, they've worked at some of Wellington's best-known venues – Cinderella, Atlas, Ortega Fish Shack, Mighty Mighty, Baker Gramercy, ParrotDog and The Bresolin.

Now married, the couple met while working together at The Bresolin – Miers in front-of-house, Adam in the kitchen. "We had this common goal of living a life surrounded by food and working together," says Miers.

After a stint in London, they returned to New Zealand and moved back to

Newtown, becoming regulars at Mason (Hawkes was a friend). When Hawkes decided to close the restaurant, he offered the site to them.

“It’s bittersweet because Mason was our absolute favourite restaurant and Matt put so much personal labour into the building,” Miers says. “But it felt right that it would now be going into the hands of friends to give it another breath of life.”

Mason’s brown-leather booth seating, cabinetry, and much of the original fit-out remain, but there’s now added lighting over the bar, which makes for a more consistent ambience; plants; and a mixture of art prints showing al fresco European eateries with views of summery landscapes.

The rustic, European-inspired menu focuses on seasonal sharing plates. There are puffy Comté gougeres and Adam’s take on beef tartare, served with caramelised onion parmesan chips. Anchovy fans can order a whole tin of the sweet, fleshy Ortiz brand with Margot’s house-made bread and butter. Raw fish will always be on the menu with differing seasonal accompaniments – for opening week, it’s trevally with citrus, rosemary and Aleppo pepper.

The wine list includes both natural and classic wines, with a focus on approachable drops.

“People have told us we were taking on a huge risk to open a restaurant during a pandemic, but if you can do it now, you can do it anytime,” says Miers.

**Margot**

3 Wilson Street, Newtown, Wellington

**Hours:**

Tue-Thu 5pm-9:30pm

Fri 5pm-9:30pm

Sat 3pm-9:30pm

[margotnewtown.co.nz](http://margotnewtown.co.nz)

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