



The perfect beachside feast.

HEART CAFÉ - A CAFÉ WITH A CONSCIENCE

Words **Joel Bevilacqua** Picture **Stefanie Neal**

The opening of Bondi's latest café means locals can now enjoy great coffee and a creative menu knowing they are helping transform the lives of at-risk youth.

Owned and run by Eastern Suburbs not-for-profit the Wayside Chapel, Heart Café prepares disadvantaged youth for a career in hospitality. Through Wayside Chapel's Wingspan Project, young people facing barriers to employment will receive paid hospitality traineeships within the busy, Bondi Beach-adjacent café.

But Heart isn't just a social enterprise, it's also a damn good café (apologies to Wayside pastor Jon Owen for the language).

Heart Café has a laidback, semi-rustic interior. For a claustrophobe like me, the spacious seating plan and sea breeze allowed to flow through the large open windows were both major

ticks. I could definitely imagine taking my laptop here (they provide free wifi for customers) and putting in a few hours of work. Or, if it were a weekend, discussing openly with friends our previous night's adventures without unwanted judgment from a far-too-close-for-comfort neighbouring table.

Cool design and close proximity to the beach aside, the acid test for a new café is always going to be the standard of its coffee, regardless of where the profits are going. Even the noblest of spirits won't keep returning if this primary service isn't up to scratch. Luckily the coffees made for us, courtesy of Gypsy Espresso, were A-grade, even gaining the approval of my hard to please (did someone say coffee snob?) girlfriend, who in the past has left many substandard almond lattes virtually untouched.

As for the food, chef Antonio Saco serves up a delicious, wholesome menu that sports gourmet breakfast bowls and healthy salads, plus myriad creative dishes such as the Middle Eastern breakfast with smoky baba ghanoush and the Japanese inspired miso mushroom poached eggs. Heart Café's community-orientated philosophy means ingredients are locally sourced: the bread is supplied by the Bread and Butter Project, which teaches and employs refugee women as bakers, and much of the organic produce comes straight from Wayside's community garden, just up the road.

There are some enticing options for the less disciplined too (which we ordered when we visited for lunch), such as the Heart chorizo roll and the Andean chips. The chorizo roll was a good as it sounds. To combat the salty chorizo, the bread that sandwiched the glorious Spanish sausage was lathered in a fresh chimichurri sauce. Our Andean chips – made from regular, sweet and purple potatoes – were curiously topped with roasted nuts, but it worked. We at least attempted to balance these orders with the Mediterranean chicken, which was served with a tangy Greek yoghurt and pomegranate infused salad. If you are feeling hungry when you visit Heart Cafe, this is the perfect big summer lunch.

At around \$16 for breakfast, the food is reasonably priced, and you order knowing that every dollar you spend will be funnelled back into Wayside's Wingspan Project.

Heart Cafe

Web www.heartcafe.com.au

Address 95 Roscoe Street, Bondi Beach

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Phone (02) 9581 9150

Open Daily, 7am - 4pm

Prices From \$5 for croissants to \$22 for some mains

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