

Michael Stolley

Executive Chef · Culinary Creative Director

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PROFILE

Executive Chef and Culinary Creative Director with 20+ years in kitchens across multi-venue leadership, venue launches, high-volume service and independent collaborations in Melbourne, Bali and Jakarta. A hands-on operator who builds teams, systems and culinary standards that hold through opening, growth and stabilisation.

My work spans menu and recipe development, kitchen builds, recruitment, coaching and training, purchasing, cost control and service systems. I work collaboratively within an established vision while bringing a clear, ingredient-led point of view.

Indonesia is an increasingly important part of my food practice. My cooking is cross-cultural and technique-led, with deep practice across Japanese, Cantonese, Indonesian, Italian, Mediterranean and modern Australian traditions, plus seafood, raw fish and fire-led cooking through yakitori, hibachi, asador and wood-fire grilling.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

3

VENUE LAUNCHES
IN 18 MONTHS

\$100-120K

WEEKLY REVENUE
DELIVERED

~25%

MENU STRUCTURES
ALIGNED TO COGS

- Trusted by senior Melbourne chefs across multiple kitchens: **Atsushi** (Future Future), **Diana Desensi** (Bar Bambi, Daphne), **Matt Woodhouse** (Untitled), **Mischa Tropp** (Avani, Tucks, Toddy Shop).
- Sold-out 12-course omakase residency in Jakarta (**Japfa**, January 2023). **Mantis Bali** collaboration set the venue's highest single-night covers.
- Independent Indonesian-leaning pop-up practice across Melbourne: **Warkop** takeover, **Little Andora**, **Theodore's**, MFWF events.

CREATIVE DIRECTION & VENUE LEADERSHIP

Interim Consultant Executive Chef, Yolk Group / Terror Twilight Catering, Melbourne 2026
Interim consulting assignment during a leadership transition, supporting catering production and kitchen operations.

- Stabilised systems, staffing, workflow, costing and day-to-day operational problem-solving.
- Supported recruitment, production planning and team structure through the transition.

Culinary Creative Director, Mama's Dining Group, Melbourne 2024-2026
Led culinary creative direction and opening execution across a multi-venue hospitality group, translating distinct concepts into service-ready kitchens, menus, systems and teams.

- Led the launch of three venues over 18 months: **Windsor Wine Room**, **Suzie Q** and **DISUKO**.
- Built kitchen systems, recipe books, SOPs and training frameworks across all three venues.
- Defined menu structure, plating language and culinary identity for each concept while aligning menus to approximately 25% COGS.
- Coordinated kitchen builds, equipment, suppliers and council requirements through opening.
- Worked across recruitment, training, service standards and post-opening stabilisation, supporting operations delivering **\$100-120K** weekly revenue.

Relaunch Head Chef, Ocean Beach Pavilion, Mornington Peninsula 2022

- Relaunch role for Jerome Borazio and Mark Hinkley during Covid trading conditions.
- Kept the venue operating through restrictions while reworking the offering and introducing a sushi program.

Head Chef, Eazy Peazy, Melbourne 2021

- Led kitchen relaunch as a Japanese yakitori concept.

Head Chef, Mrs Singh's, Melbourne 2020

- Launch role under chef-restaurateur Jessi Singh. Modern Indian concept. Strong opening reviews; venue closed at the three-month mark due to Covid shutdowns.

Head Chef, ISH Indian Restaurant, Melbourne 2019-2020

- Post-opening leadership. Featured on Channel 9's The Getaway during tenure.

Head Chef, PolëPolë & Glamp Cocktail Bar, Melbourne 2015-2018

- Head Chef across modern African concept and adjoining cocktail bar.

INDONESIA
&
COLLABORATIVE
PRACTICE

An independent practice of collaborations, residencies and pop-ups across Bali, Jakarta and Melbourne, with Indonesian food becoming an increasingly important part of my work.

BALI

- **Mantis Bali** - guest collaboration, 30.12.22. Delivered the venue's highest single-night covers.

JAKARTA

- **Japfa** - two-week sold-out omakase residency, January 2023. 25 seats per night, 12 courses.
- **Cooks CC** - single-day guest chef menu.
- **Chef Archie** (@archiepelagic) - collaborative omakase.

MELBOURNE

- **MFWF x Makan** - 'Things We Like to Makan', Indonesian menu with Tasia & Gracia.
- **Warkop, Richmond** - guest collaboration followed by a week-long takeover with an Indonesian-leaning sandwich menu.
- **Elsie's 'Mischa & Friends'** - guest chef alongside Tom Sarafian, Matt Woodhouse, Harry Mangat and Mischa Tropp.
- **Suzie Q x Brendan Pang** - MFWF collaboration.
- **Pop-up residencies** at Little Andora, Theodore's and Comma Food & Wine.

SENIOR
KITCHEN
SUPPORT

Trusted by senior Melbourne chefs to step into their kitchens during transitions, launches and high-pressure periods. Peer support at chef level: stations, the pass, training juniors, holding standards.

Atsushi Sakai, Future Future, Fitzroy

2021 to present

- Long-standing relationship with the head chef and co-owner. Sustained 5-day-a-week periods covering all stations including the pass, alongside holiday and MFWF event cover. Refined the stations, trained the juniors, brought in new techniques.

Diana Desensi, Bar Bambi & Daphne

2024-2026

- Supported Diana on the Bar Bambi relaunch (late 2024): kitchen systems, training, standards.
- Three-month post-opening support at Daphne (Etta Group) during the venue's stabilisation phase while the permanent kitchen team was being built (December 2025 - early 2026).

Matt Woodhouse, Untitled, Richmond

2023

- Supported the kitchen during Matt's takeover as Head Chef of the Andrew Ryan / Melbourne Pub Group venue. Stabilisation, standards, recipe and station setup.

Mischa Tropp, Avani, Tucks Winery & Toddy Shop

2023

- Second chef on Mischa's residency at Avani Winery.
- Prepped, opened and ran his one-month residency at Tucks Winery, including a full weekend of solo service during his Covid absence. Residency extended to two months on the strength of the work.
- Day-one launch support at Toddy Shop (Fitzroy, December 2023), including running the kitchen solo on the first Sunday open.

EARLIER
CAREER

Bivouac Canteen & Bar, Melbourne. Chef de Partie. Modern Middle Eastern and Mediterranean.

Kissho, Shanghai. Sushi Chef. Fine dining open sushi and sashimi bar.

Ballajura Community College, Perth. Industry Chef Master Class. Weekly visiting chef teaching the Cert 2 in Cookery program. The same program completed there as a student.

CORE
CAPABILITIES

Multi-venue leadership and team development

Mid-to-high-volume kitchen systems, staffing and service standards, 100-300+ covers

Menu engineering and cost control (~25% COGS)

Concept-to-launch venue execution

Menu and dish development across a broad range of cuisines

Fire-led cooking (charcoal, yakitori, hibachi) and fermentation

Kitchen builds, purchasing, food safety and compliance

Brand and creative direction: menu language, venue identity

MEDIA

Featured Chef. Channel 9's The Getaway. Episode filmed during tenure at ISH Restaurant.

Guest Chef. OZ Africa TV. Two seasons.