

# Michael Stolley

Culinary Creative Director

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## PROFILE

I'm a culinary creative director with 20+ years in kitchens. My work runs across three connected modes: venue launches and creative direction with hospitality groups, an independent run of pop-ups and collaborations across Melbourne, Bali and Jakarta, and senior peer support for Melbourne chefs.

The work that matters to me sits at the intersection of culture, systems and people: taking a founder's concept, building the kitchen and team that can execute it, and holding the standard through the messy parts of opening and stabilising. The strongest venues come from balancing creative ambition with commercial reality and a kitchen culture the team wants to be part of.

Food language is cross-cultural and technique-led, with deep practice across Japanese, Cantonese, Indonesian, Italian, Mediterranean and modern Australian traditions, and broader experience in Thai, Indian, African, South American and American BBQ. Technical depth in fire (Asian and European: yakitori, hibachi, asador, wood-fire grill), umami-acid balance, and fermentation.

## 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

### Culinary Creative Director, Mama's Dining Group, Melbourne

2024-2026

- Led launch of three venues over 18 months: **Windsor Wine Room** (wine bar), **Suzie Q** (modern Cantonese), **DISUKO** (Japanese-leaning).
- Built kitchen systems, recipe books, SOPs and training documents across all three venues.
- Defined plating language, menu structure and culinary identity for each concept.
- Coordinated kitchen builds, equipment, supplier relationships and council approvals.

### 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.

**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.

**INTERNATIONAL  
&  
COLLABORATIVE  
PRACTICE**

*A parallel practice of guest chef collaborations, residencies and pop-ups across Melbourne, Bali and Jakarta, focused on an independent Indonesian-leaning voice alongside the launch and group work.*

**BALI**

- **Mantis Bali.** Collaboration, 30.12.22. Venue's busiest night to date.

**JAKARTA**

- **Japfa.** Two-week sold-out omakase residency, January 2023. 25 seats per night, 12 courses.
- **Cooks CC.** Single-day guest chef menu, 27.01.23.
- **Chef Archie** (@archiepelagic). Collaboration omakase, 29.01.23.

**MELBOURNE**

- **MFWF x Makan.** 'Things We Like to Makan', 21.03.24. Indonesian menu with Tasia & Gracia.
- **Warkop, Richmond.** Guest chef collaboration (babi guling banh mi) followed by week-long shop takeover with an Indonesian-leaning sandwich menu.
- **Elsie's 'Mischa & Friends'.** Guest chef alongside Tom Sarafian, Matt Woodhouse, Harry Mangat and Mischa Tropp (2024).
- **Suzie Q.** MFWF collaboration with Brendan Pang.
- **Pop-up residencies:** Little Andora, Theodore's, Comma Food & Wine (with Matt Woodhouse).

**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**

Concept-to-launch venue execution

Menu development, dish structure, palate calibration

Mid to high-volume kitchen systems, 100–300+ covers

Menu engineering and cost control (~25% COGS)

Multi-venue leadership and team development

Kitchen builds: layout, equipment, council, suppliers

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

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.