

29 JULY
2013

BUSINESS

GINGER JONES

LONSDALE ST

OPENED - SEPT 2012

JULY 29, 2013 P. 16

CAFÉ NEWCOMER IN LINE FOR TOP AWARD

FOOD

After more than a decade of managing cafés and restaurants, Rob Jones harboured a nagging desire to open his own.

Last year, he noted that Dandenong had a largely untapped market for the inner-city style cafés he was accustomed to and, to his delight, his hospitality stars aligned.

"When looking to open here, I realised how many people working in Dandenong aren't actually from the area and the demand for more inner city-style places was there," Mr Jones said.

Last November he opened Ginger Jones in Lonsdale Street, in the heart of Dandenong. The business has kicked off with a bang and Ginger Jones has been nominated in the Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce 2013 Premier Regional Business Awards in three categories – small business, retail and service excellence.

Mr Jones said part of the reason for the café's success was its modern interior but, more importantly, the attention to detail in its food.

"The food we do is not that different to other cafés, we just place a big emphasis on presentation and the manner in which we serve our food," he said. "I'm not saying that



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Quick rise: Rob Jones' Lonsdale Street cafe has attracted a loyal following.
(WAYNE HAWKINS)

other places in Dandenong don't do that, but we saw a gap in that area and went for it."

Mr Jones said the state government's \$290 million project Revitalising Central Dandenong and the activity this would attract was another strong reason for setting up in the area.

The response from locals in the café's first nine months had been pleasing.

"It's been really positive," he said. "I'm an owner/operator who's here every day so I think that helps, being hands on and able to speak with regulars."

For the record, Ginger Jones' top three most popular items are the slow-roasted pork belly, macaroni and cheese and its homemade hash browns.

"We aim to change menus about three times a year," Mr Jones said. "We've already been through two so we definitely aren't resting on our laurels."

Ginger Jones, along with fellow nominees Lupe Wines and Victorian Smash Repairs, will be recognised at the next Greater Dandenong Chamber of Commerce breakfast on August 7.

The regional business award winners will be announced next March.

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