

INTERIOR



TOP HOSPITALITY

Eat Drink Design awards the region's best hospitality interiors. The latest local eateries and vineyard.



Masquespacio, Spain's masters of vibrant colour and the unexpected.

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The interior of urban eatery *Amano* evokes the joy and freshness of an Italian marketplace.
(Right) The bar is centrally located and visually segments the two seating areas, preventing the expansive restaurant from feeling too large.
(Opposite page) Bunches of dried flowers from a Nelson supplier hang above the open kitchen.



IT'S Wednesday night in Auckland's Britomart, and *Amano*, the newest restaurant on Tyler Street's hot row, is buzzing. This is just as well, because the restaurant and its adjoining bakery of the same name make up an ambitiously large and opulent space. They are housed in two of what are thought to be original port warehouses, and the restaurant also opens onto Quay Street.

The latest addition to Hip Group's impressive family of establishments (which includes the likes of Milse, Ortolano, Takapuna Beach Store and Rosie), *Amano* is designed around the theme of an Italian marketplace. The design was a collaborative effort between Jack McKinney and his team at McKinney + Windeatt Architects and Hip Group, led by Jackie Grant. The initial idea was to create a city market, with food and produce to go, and there is still an element of this idea alive in the final product, with a potential food store area planned near the Tyler Street entrance. A gelato store is also in the works for the Quay Street entrance.

For McKinney, the essence of an Italian-style restaurant is welcoming and open. This is translated in the design through a palette of pale colours, reflective and luminous surfaces, and soft edges.

"My impression of Tyler Street – you think of Ostro and Tyler Street Garage – is dark and hard and quite urban. We wanted to do the reverse, so we put a really light floor in and made the mother-of-pearl cabinets

glow. It's that idea that if you light a fire, people will be attracted to it."

The floor is the hero of the space. A white terrazzo base is inlaid with seemingly randomly-placed offcuts from stonemasons' yards. Making use of these pieces – which might have been cut to the wrong size or cracked in transit – is reflective of Hip Group's nose-to-tail philosophy. The menu at *Amano* uses unusual cuts of meat and the seafood section often features by-catches, which would otherwise have been thrown back into the sea as waste. The company has its own farm to supply its kitchens, says Grant.

"I want people to be very comfortable and able to sit for hours, even at the bar, enjoying high-quality seating, something they may not choose for their home."

Jackie Grant

"We kept encountering suppliers that frustrated us, so it has developed where if we think there is a better way of doing things, we do it ourselves. That's where the farm started. It's the same with fish. It is impossible for restaurants in New Zealand to order good fish; it all gets exported. Our executive chef goes to the market herself to buy the fish every morning."

The open kitchen is huge, running only marginally short of the length of the restaurant. Executive Chef Jo Pearson was involved in its design, which features a flour mill for the creation of fresh bread and pasta.

"The kitchen is a big piece of theatre; it's a pretty heroic kitchen," says McKinney. "People can sit up here and be involved in all the activity, which also means they can dine alone comfortably."

