

Alex Kearns Glebe Point Diner

There's nothing unusual about poultry deliveries at Glebe Point Diner, a restaurant known for its organic roast chook with bread sauce. But the arrival of two live chooks has staff in a flap. "Everyone here seems to have grown up with chickens; they're really excited when they arrive," chef Alex Kearns, 29, records in his chook diary on Day One. "We kick around lots of ideas for names. One of the chefs, who likes hip-hop music, wants to name them Biggie and Tupac [two American hip hop artists gunned down in the late 1990s]. In the end we settle on Betsy and Hetsy."

The new arrivals settle

into a small area behind the restaurant overlooked by an apartment block, where they produce an average of 1½ eggs a day. "The customers don't know they are out there, but we were a bit concerned about the neighbours," Kearns writes. "Turns out they love them. Not one complaint. It didn't hurt that we made friends by giving away some eggs."

The kitchen crew become enthusiastic chook carers, delivering them kitchen scraps and discovering their picky eating habits: "Betsy and Hetsy don't like bean pods but like the beans. And they love leftover bread and pastry. I've got no complaints about the mess they make, it's surprisingly small."

By Day Five, Kearns



Alex Kearns' devilled eggs

6 eggs
1½ tbsp mayonnaise
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
Salt and pepper
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp chives, finely chopped
1 red chilli, finely chopped
Zest of ½ lemon

Place eggs in a pot of cold water and bring to the boil. Reduce to a medium simmer and cook for 8 minutes. Stop cooking by placing eggs in cold water. Peel eggs and halve lengthwise with a very sharp knife or a string of cotton. Gently scoop out yolks with a teaspoon. Using a fork, mash yolks with mayonnaise and mustard. Add salt and pepper to taste. Ball up the mixture and place back into the whites. To serve, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with chives, chilli and lemon zest.

Serves 3 as an appetiser.

is won over by the eggs, which he and his staff eat poached or fried and, on one day, in a frittata. "They are unbelievable. Really consistent in taste. They hold together so well you don't need to stir the water or put in vinegar to poach them. I can't poach an egg to save my life but these ones make you look good."

After three weeks, Kearns realises it's not feasible to keep the hens in the courtyard behind the restaurant. "Everyone is sad to see Betsy and Hetsy go. Most of us would love to have chickens at home, but it isn't possible because we nearly all live in apartments. I'd also love a goat at the restaurant. That way we could get rid of the bins."