

TARONGA PIAZZA

— inspired by
Giovanni Pilu

What's happening at Taronga Zoo that's culinary? Taronga and RA are calling on the expertise of serious chefs to share their remarkable cuisines with zoo visitors.

It started when the global catering juggernaut *Restaurant Associates* (RA) lured the popular and respected English chef Sean Connolly as their Culinary Ambassador in 2010, a role he savours with great enthusiasm. In 2012 Taronga Centre (the function arm of the zoo run by RA) launched their new look function spaces along with a fabulous Sean Connolly menu, which has been a smash hit.

For 2013 they sought out northern beaches Sardinian sensation Giovanni Pilu, head chef and owner of award winning 2-hatted *Pilu at Freshwater*.

Together RA and Pilu are about to launch *Taronga Piazza inspired by Giovanni Pilu* – put more simply *Taronga Piazza*. It is the Top Plaza café site and is accessed without entering the zoo itself. It will be zoo-friendly with a strong take-out element as well as table service in the café that seats 80.

“The takeout food is inspired by classic Italian cafés where you can have home-baked cakes with a great Lavazza coffee for morning tea or a panino and a beer for lunch,” enthused Giovanni. “The café is for those who wish a more leisurely experience. A perfect lunch is a bowl of Sardinian pasta with sausage ragu and a crisp glass of Italian Pinot Grigio.”

The mindset of Giovanni is to combine authentic produce from Sardinia/Italy with fresh local produce. Taronga is investigating providing the zoo-grown herbs for this produce-driven chef to use in his pastas and salads. The zoo already provides some herbs to another RA café in the zoo grounds.

Born in a small town of Sotza (pop. 350) Pilu came to Australia in 1992 at age 20. His first restaurant *Cala Luna* in Mosman presents a broad Italian menu. Since opening *Pilu at Freshwater* in 2004 Giovanni has expanded his repertoire cooking more Sardinian food that's in his blood and close to his heart.

The president of CIRA (Council of Italian Restaurants in Australia) Giovanni launched his cookbook *A Sardinian Cookbook* in 2012 and won the 2013 People's Choice IACP Cookbook Awards. Only last week it was released in Holland.

Taronga Piazza inspired by Giovanni Pilu opens on Wednesday 24th July. 90 minute free parking is available for patrons. *Taronga Piazza* is open from 9.30am – 4.30pm (Winter - May to August) and 5pm in Summer. It is not open for dinner but is available for functions.

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Restaurant Associates