

Photos: Jon Green
Stylist: Deidre Noon



sweet escape

As shiny as a cachou, as tasteful as white chocolate and cranberry pistachio nougat and as much a treat as her dark chocolate sable cookies and cream ice cream, Rochelle Adonis's eponymous North Perth studio is a delight. **Sarah Green** visits.





If this isn't a café, then these aren't customers – more like guests that she's allowed into her dining room. Rochelle says that's exactly what she intended. The Brisbane Street studio also doubles as her office – a workstation complete with her children's colourful drawings – and occasionally a working area, with the two huge marble tables in the centre of the room doubling as workbenches.

THOSE WHO KNOW anything about Rochelle Adonis know that Perth is fortunate to have one of the world's top pastry chefs residing in our city. Raised in the French Canadian city of Montreal, Rochelle trained in Sydney before working in a London cake boutique baking for the royal family and in Vienna at the prestigious Hotel Sacher. She returned to Australia as the acting head pastry chef at 41 in Sydney, later working at Moran's and Aria as head pastry chef. Then – and here's the best part – she moved to Perth in 2000.

Rochelle has kept a relatively low profile in Perth, baking cakes for friends of friends and making her renowned nougat from home for the last five years while raising two children. Her background and philosophy of using only the best ingredients – free-range egg whites, WA honey, French and Belgian chocolate – have earned her a solid fan base. It's no surprise, then, that her newly-opened store has a constant stream of appreciative guests on the Saturday morning I visit.

I've heard so many rave reviews about Rochelle Adonis over the last few years that I

half expect this high priestess of pastry to be somewhat formidable, not the young blonde woman who welcomes me warmly with a dimpled smile as I walk into the shop.

Her cosmopolitan background means Rochelle has one of those accents that you can't quite pick. She tells me that opening a shop was not a step she had planned to make but a number of personal factors led her to reconsider.

"When I found this space, it reminded me of home," said Rochelle.

"If I was going to move the business out of my home, I wanted to keep it really personal."

"This was always going to be a studio – I didn't want an androgynous café."

It's for this reason that Rochelle decided to offer plunger coffee rather than going down the espresso path, which she explains would make it more of a café – and insists without a hint of an apology that it's not. The fresh Fiori coffee is beautifully presented – like everything else in the shop – in individual plungers and alongside miniature milk bottles.

Rochelle apologises for interrupting our conversation to serve customers and check on beeping ovens but it gives me a chance to have a look around the shop. To a cake-lover, this is heaven. Pretty confectioneries and immaculate pastries decorated with the Adonis flourish fill the front cabinet. Drool-worthy white chocolate rocky road and dreamy hazelnut tarts stand to attention. Framed pictures of some of Rochelle's work decorate one wall and cake stands, cookbooks, antique cutlery, garlanded lights and gilded mirrors complete the scene. I take a quick peek at the kitchen out the back and ogle the giant tubs of Belgian chocolate buds and slabs of cake.

The shop also stocks Rochelle's sumptuously-packaged nougat, which has become somewhat of an Adonis trademark. Rochelle admits the success of the nougat came as a relative surprise as it was something she decided to play around with in the middle of a cake-making frenzy. She now has an agent for the product and it can be found in over 90 shops across Australia.

Rochelle is continuing to bake cakes for weddings, events and the shop but said



STEAMED GINGER PUDDING WITH BUTTERSCOTCH SAUCE

375 ml water
1 cup molasses
1 tsp bicarb soda
125 g unsalted butter at room temperature
1 cup brown sugar – firmly packed
1 egg (60g)
1/2 tsp salt
2 tsp ground ginger
1 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp ground cloves
2 1/2 cups plain flour
1 tbs baking powder

she won't be heading down the wholesale supplier route - she doesn't want to get bored by churning out the same cakes. Rochelle is the first to admit that she's more motivated by pleasure than business.

"People think I'm mad but I have no business plan – I'm just not good at that stuff," she said.

"I'm just doing what I enjoy and seeing what happens with this space and where it evolves."

Rochelle tells me ice cream is her current folly – she's created a cookies and cream variety using crushed dark chocolate sables, a nougat praline and a less traditional kumquat and vanilla. It's also a somewhat pragmatic decision as ice cream provides the perfect use for the leftover egg yolks from nougat-making.

Rocky road is something else she's starting experimenting with and one to look out for. With a firm reputation for making products that look as fantastic as they taste, one gets the feeling the road will be anything but rocky for this talented pastry chef.

Rochelle Adonis is open Wednesday to Friday 9-5 and Saturday 10-4. 183 Brisbane Street, Northbridge

Prepare your chosen moulds, pans or dishes by brushing well with melted butter the dusting with caster sugar. Bring the water to the boil in a small pot, then add the molasses and bicarb soda – set aside. Cream together the butter and sugar until pale and creamy. Scrape down the sides of the bowl, add the egg and continue to mix. Sift the remaining dry ingredients together and gently fold into the butter mixture, alternating with the molasses mixture. You can do this with a mixer on low speed. Pour into the prepared moulds and place in a water bath, cover with foil and bake in

180°C oven for about 30 minutes or until a skewer comes out clean.

BUTTERSCOTCH SAUCE

This can be made well in advance.

400 g caster sugar
600 ml pouring cream

Combine the sugar with enough water to make a wet paste in a large heavy-based pot. Clean the sides of the pot with wet fingers, and place on a high heat until golden. Remove from heat and quickly (but very carefully) whisk in the cream. Pour liberally over the pudding. ✨

