

# A night in The Conservatory

Nicole Slater takes a closer look at Sai Kung's best restaurant, as voted by you



From left to right: Gloria, Virginia and Virgie

## A brief history

Since opening its doors in 2016, The Conservatory has become a staple in Sai Kung Square, claiming the title of best restaurant for two years running.

After the restaurant won our Readers' Choice Awards again this year, we wanted to pay a visit and see how it's been getting on since it opened two years ago.

Rob and Kim Cooper are a husband-and-wife duo who founded the restaurant group Enoteca. After relocating to Clearwater Bay, they decided to learn from the success from their Central restaurants and give it a go in Sai Kung.

The Conservatory lives up to its name, with a large front window flooding the inside with natural light. With its dainty and refined decor, featuring bright-white walls and banana-leaf-patterned panels, this restaurant stands out amongst other restaurants around the town.

Like most restaurants in the Enoteca group, the dishes are designed for sharing, with salads, nibbles and pizzas. Some of their standout dishes include the wild mushroom & parmesan risotto balls and the grilled paprika chicken skewers with green chilli & lime dressing.

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## The concept

Describing the concept behind the restaurant, Rob states: "Sai Kung is known for being the garden of Hong Kong, so we wanted to create a garden-type restaurant with an outdoorsy/indoorsy feeling. We really built everything

around the banana-leaf wallpaper that Kim found!"

Kim adds: "Trying to make it feel like a conservatory was quite difficult but the wallpaper played a very big part. As soon as it was ready I thought we have to do High Tea here, it just looks like the perfect place for having High Tea."

## The opening

When the couple initially moved to the area, opening a restaurant wasn't their top priority. "We held off for quite a while. We knew we had a market but since so many people owned homes here compared to Central we thought they'd probably eat dinner at home every night, but it turns out people in Sai Kung do eat out a lot too," Rob explains.

When talking about the success of The

## Did you know?

You can order food from **The Picture House** while dining in **The Conservatory**, and vice versa.



Rob and Kim's daughter Summer enjoying the children's tiffins

Conservatory, Kim states: "I don't think either of us realised it would be busy quickly. We were pretty much busy from day one. I think Sai Kung was ready for something a bit more grown-up because everything is kind of the same. Everyone was so happy to have a bit of Central in Sai Kung."

## Challenges

Although The Conservatory has successfully won over the hearts and stomachs of many residents, there were some challenges the restaurant had to consider. Rob elaborates; "We had to consider that everybody has homes with big kitchens here compared to Soho, so a big concern for us was whether families were going to eat at their dinner table every night, rather than go out. But it turns out people in Sai Kung do eat out a lot too!"

Kim adds: "Catering to children was also a new experience, we never had a kids menu in central. So we wanted to do something a little different and interactive for the kids with our Tiffins, as I noticed many of the kids meals in the town didn't have vegetables. Now I get mothers thanking me for finally getting their kids to eat vegetables!"

## Why The Conservatory

What makes The Conservatory so unique is the quality of service, Kim reveals. "At the beginning I said that just because it's Sai Kung and we're serving children, it doesn't mean we can be slack. Taking over The Picture House was a bit tricky for that reason, because we took over all the staff, and they were resistant to doing it the proper way; they just never had before. But now it's good."

With so many restaurants opening and closing around the town, Rob has a prediction: "I think we're going to see a lot more change over the years. There's going to be a few old favourites that are probably going to disappear. I think there's going to be about four or five new restaurants coming in in the next two years."

Everyone at The Conservatory feels honoured and privileged to receive your vote for Best Restaurant once again this year. Thanking their staff, Kim says: "A lot of it is down to the staff we have here. They have created bonds with the customers, and it really helps. I feel a little bit scared now because I really want to change the menu!"

Over the next few months you can expect to see some new additions to the menu, but don't worry, many favourite dishes will be staying.



## must-order dishes

- Peri Peri Chicken "I sneak in Peri Peri Chicken on every menu."
- Moroccan Lamb Cutlets
- Risotto Balls
- Mediterranean Pizza
- Smoked Tuna Ceviche "My favourite one to serve; it always gets a woahh."

