

# What's Cooking?

**Executive Chef Paul Freestone is the man in charge of the 8,000 meals being served every day at Star City.**

**D**eep in the criss-cross of caverns that run underneath Star City, a seldom-seen army are hard at work. Decked out in their puffy hats, starched white tunics, checked pants and aprons, this army works around the clock to ensure food is available in all areas of the building 24 hours a day.

The army consists of a team of 221 chefs and 120 stewards and the general in charge of the lot of them is Executive Chef, Paul Freestone.

Paul joined the company during the earliest days of the temporary Sydney Harbour Casino and helped design the kitchens as the Star City complex was under construction.

His staff are responsible for more than 8,000 major meals served every day in the seven restaurants, banquets and buffet areas. That is about \$1.3 million worth of food every month and about two million meals in total at Star City each year.

Not that all this responsibility intimidates this seasoned veteran. With 15 years' experience as a chef credit, 31-year-old Paul is very much king of his domain and has total faith in every member of his team.

"We are a young team and this contributes to the energy of this place," he says. "As we are a new organisation, we do not have a long tradition of thinking, 'this is how it is has always been done' to limit us.

"We haven't brought any bad habits with us and if we created any, we have resolved them pretty fast. This is a team that thinks outside of the square and is prepared to bend and try new things, never too rigid or set in our ways. I like to say we are doing our best and we continue to set our standards high."

Paul has a long tradition of working to meet the highest standards. Serving his



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years of apprenticeship in a range of restaurants across his native United Kingdom, Paul then joined the staff working on the luxury liner, the QEII, as Head Chef in all four restaurants on board the famous ship.

During one of the QEII's dockings in Sydney, Paul fell in love with the harbour city and decided to stay. The lure of Melbourne's Crown Casino, however, tempted him away for a year, before the offer to join the staff of the original Sydney Harbour Casino brought him happily back to Sydney.

The diverse tastes of Star City's patrons ensures Paul's job provides him with on-going challenges.

"There will be some who like steamed

broccoli and that is all they want to eat. The most unusual demands I come across are with some of the Chinese foods, like pig's spleen and the fat from the sperm tube of the snow frog from Mongolia, which we do serve.

"The Chinese foods constantly amaze me, particularly the different grades of shark fins. When I go out to the loading dock, I have to determine which fins are up to standard and which aren't. The day I knew what I was talking about, I figured that was a real achievement!"

*Restaurant Reservations: (02) 9657 7553  
After-hours line: 1800 700 700  
Pyrmont's, Lifesavers Café, Al Porto, Astral, Trophies, Garden Buffet, Lotus Pond.*