



Words: Sara Bunny

## Vive La Vaniyé

An authentic patisserie brings Parisian chic to Parnell

Dessert chef Sonia Haumonté expertly pipes an elaborate mixture of green tea, almonds and red fruits into petite baking moulds, her hands hovering deftly above the bench and her eyes sparkling as she describes her love of fine French food.

"It's not just baking, it's art. You have to eat it slowly, savour it and really taste it."

Parnell locals have been quietly enjoying delectable desserts and sumptuous baguettes from their neighbourhood patisserie for months. Now the word is getting out and foodies from further afield are following their noses to the unassuming little shop on Windsor Street, just off Parnell Road.

At Vaniyé, Sonia and her husband Laurent enjoy introducing customers to the rich flavours, inspirational culinary combinations and a way of truly understanding and appreciating food that is so uniquely French.

"On a Sunday afternoon in Paris you might go to a patisserie and have a dessert," says Laurent. "Food is about sharing, you sit and talk about it, you take your time and you end up eating less."

The couple laugh good-naturedly as they recall the different types of customers

they see at the patisserie. "These lovely Kiwi guys come in and often they have finished their desserts before I've had time to come back and pour their water," says Sonia. "The European customers will sit for an hour and a half."

With many Kiwi women holding a soft spot for chocolate and sweet treats, a decadent dessert from Vaniyé could be just the ticket for Mother's Day early next month. Chef Sonia's ornate creations include traditional macarons, ganache and entremets, featuring exotic flavours such as chocolate with sesame and Japanese yellow soybean, and raspberry coulis with balsamic vinegar.

"One dessert will have three or four different compositions in it," she says. "It's nice to open people's palates to different things."

On her OE in Paris, Sonia fell in love with the city's patisseries and decided to train as a dessert chef at the prestigious international culinary school, Le Cordon Bleu. At the Parisian school, the same kitchen where renowned chef Julia Child trained, Sonia was dedicated to learning as much about French baking as she possibly could.

"It's a tough kitchen. You work hard, but its good preparation for the real world."

In Paris, Sonia met her French husband Laurent, who jokes about how easily she shows him up when it comes to French baking. "I'm from the East of France, and worked in Paris for ten years. Then I met Sonia and she knew so much and wasn't even French! So I had to take some evening baking courses."

The pair run the patisserie as a team. Laurent has another job away from the kitchen, but puts an apron over his suit early in the morning to make the day's baguettes and croissants. After work he goes back to the kitchen and works alongside Sonia till about 10pm, when they finally head home.

"We don't get much sleep," laughs Sonia. "But when I do get home I'm asleep as soon as my head hits the pillow. I always feel so happy and satisfied with my day's work."

For more information visit [vaniye.com](http://vaniye.com)

Left to right:  
Laurent, hard at work making bread (left) and decadent desserts from the patisserie cabinet (right)