

TDN 9/10/2013

Auction of Andre's marks end of era

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There is widespread nostalgia at the loss of New Plymouth's historic award-winning French restaurant following the death of its colourful owner.

Andre's L'Escargot's land, buildings and fittings go under the hammer on October 25.

The sale follows the loss of restaurateur Andre Teissonniere to cancer earlier this year after which the 37-year-old business he developed closed its doors.

Andre's son, Jean Philippe Teissonniere who lives in Australia, said creating the authentic French restaurant and the customers he served were his father's life.

Many of those customers became lifetime friends.

"Dad loved food. He would always eat the best and would eat out a lot, so food was the foundation for the business and his passion was to deliver it to the public.

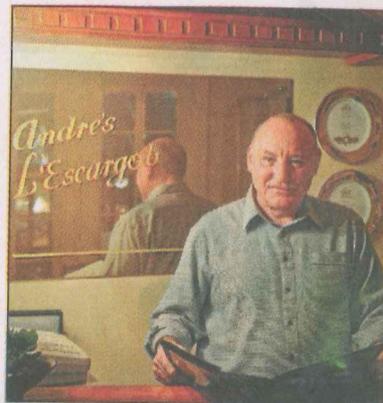
"He influenced a lot of people in the region I think by setting a standard, not only for dining out but hospitality in general. It was his vision," he said.

A former manager of Andre's, Anne-Laure Bernollin, described her time there as a great experience.

"Seeing it close was hard, it was really hard to lose Andre. I think for all the staff, he was a friend, a really good friend to me.

"But it's hard for everyone in New Plymouth, it's part of New Plymouth's history."

Trustee Bruce Richards, a shareholder in the company that owns the building, said there had been attempts to sell the iconic business, but to no avail.



Farewell: Andre Teissonniere, the owner of L'Escargot

He hoped it would soon sell and it was possible people might want to convert it to another use.

Bayley's are marketing the land and buildings through salesmen Alan Johnston and Iain Taylor.

Teissonniere established Andre's L'Escargot in 1976 on the hill in Devon St East and six years later was relocated to the present site in Brougham St.

In 1992 the adjacent building was purchased, extending the restaurant to its current size.

The restaurant seats up to 100 people.

The salesmen describe the interior's theme as one of "casual elegance and French flair". The Victorian buildings with fluted columns, lion heads, ornate wood doors and decorative iron work are listed as heritage buildings.

"The property is well-suited to an existing owner-operator in the hospitality sector or as it is being sold 'vacant possession' there is an opportunity for a potential new owner to explore a different use," Mr Taylor said.