

## EATING

### top picks

- **Vue de Monde** (p128)
- **Circa at the Prince** (p139)
- **Press Club** (p129)
- **Tempura Hajime** (p143)
- **Bar Lourinhã** (p131)
- **Seamstress** (p130)
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- **St Jude's Cellar** (p135)
- **Journal Canteen** (p131)
- **Gill's Diner** (p130)

Melbourne is one of the world's great food cities. While it doesn't have the deeply ingrained traditions and profound self-confidence of, say, Paris, Rome, Bangkok or Tokyo, it has an open, genuine exuberance about food and cooking and a talent for innovation and adaptation. It's a thrilling city for anyone who lives to eat. It shares with Sydney the Modern Australian cooking style (Mod Oz to its mates), a loose term that describes a mix of European and Asian or Middle Eastern techniques and ingredients, with a seasonal, produce-driven philosophy similar to Californian cuisine. It can also be used to describe a more straightforward adoption of dishes or ingredients from various cultures that have appeared on menus and in home kitchens; toasted pide, avocado and vegemite, anyone? This hybrid way of eating has gathered its influences from the migrants that make up the city's population. Melbourne's version of Mod Oz, and the city's culinary offerings in general, tend slightly more towards European and Mediterranean traditions, rather than Sydney's firmly Pacific Rim take. This is both a product of the city's very untropical climate, with four distinct seasons, and also perhaps due to the stronger impact Melbourne's Italian, Greek and Middle Eastern communities made on the city during the 1960s and 70s. That's not to say that you won't find wonderful Asian cooking and a host of varied Asian influences here. There's a particularly vibrant Vietnamese restaurant scene and an increasing breadth of Chinese cuisines available too.

Chefs in Melbourne aren't *exactly* celebs in the Ramsey/Roubouchon/Batali mould, with multiple franchises and massive marketing budgets, but they do enjoy a very high profile. Melburnians gobble up the *Age's* food supplement 'Epicure' every Tuesday to keep up with who's doing what in which restaurant kitchen. They watched with an air of polite disdain as the Crown Casino (p62) imported several stellar Sydney chefs (and one international franchise, Nobu; see p134) but in the name of a good feed, have embraced these as well.

The **Melbourne Food & Wine Festival** (see p13) in March is a highlight for gourmets and greedy amateurs alike; the city's best restaurants offer fixed-price lunches for a steal. As well as 'Epicure', the *Age* newspaper publishes the annual *Good Food Guide* and its companion *Cheap Eats*. Many of the restaurant reviews can be found on the newspaper's website ([www.theage.com.au](http://www.theage.com.au)); its coverage reaches further into the suburbs than this chapter can.

## HISTORY & CULTURE

The site of Melbourne was seen as a very special place to live long before John Batman set eyes on the natural falls of the Yarra. The Wurunjeri thrived because of the area's incredible bounty; the wetlands that spread south of the Yarra were teeming with life, and the Yarra itself brimmed with fish, eels and shellfish. Depending on the season, indigenous 'Melburnians' would have eaten roast kangaroo, waterfowl, fish and eel, as well as greens, grubs, yam daisies and sweet cordial concocted from banksia blossoms. The first Europeans didn't stop to notice the prelapsarian supermarket they had stumbled upon, instead rather quickly going about planting European crops and tending large flocks of sheep. Although many new arrivals were astounded by the ready supply of fresh food (especially the Irish, who were escaping the famine of the 1840s), the early settlers dined mainly on mutton, bread and butter, tea, beer

and rum. But it's hard to imagine that a few of them familiar with the gentle art of poaching didn't dine on ducks and geese. A recent archaeological dig in Little Lonsdale St area of the city revealed bones, seeds and shells that suggest, by the later part of the 19th century at least, Melburnians diets were, in fact, pretty diverse. Fine cuts of meat, fresh fruits and vegetables graced their tables. Seafood was also a staple, and oysters were not considered a luxury.

Melbourne has always been a multicultural city, but apart from the long-standing influence of the Chinese community, food tastes didn't really begin to shift from the Anglo-Celtic basics until the 1950s, when there was a large influx of Eastern European and southern Mediterranean migrants. As well as importing the goods they couldn't do without, such as olives, they set to producing cheeses, sauces and small goods that gradually found their way from specialist delis into mainstream supermarkets.

As far as restaurant culture goes, the dominance of the pub and the local 'Chinese' also began to be challenged in the 1950s. The 1956 Olympics organisers imported European chefs to help with catering, many of whom chose to stay on long after the athletes had gone home. Immigrants Georges and Mirka Mora opened their seminal restaurant at this time too. The Vietnamese, Lebanese and Turkish migrants that came to Melbourne in the 1970s have also had a lasting impact on the city's food culture. These days, rice-paper rolls, falafel and flat breads are more common on school 'tuckshop' menus than meat pies.

The last 10 years have seen an increasing interest in organic produce and provenance. Many Melburnians often shop at markets for locally grown or produced specialties, and at ethnic grocers and markets for imported spices and other ingredients. The Slow Food movement has a strong presence state-wide and there's a monthly Slow Food Market (p73), which joins a host of other farmers markets in Melbourne and around the state. Famed chef and writer Stephanie Alexander has developed a kitchen garden and cooking curriculum at an inner-city school that aims to instil a love of fresh produce and the culinary arts in a new generation. The program is set to be rolled out to other schools. What might be considered 'gourmet' in many other places, is just keeping it real in Melbourne.

## HOW MELBOURNE EATS

Many Melburnians have grown up with at least one other culinary culture besides the rather grim Anglo-Australian fare of the mid-20th century; they are also inveterate travellers. This makes for a city of adventurous, if often highly critical, palates. Melbourne's food scene is one of almost limitless choice; there is a constant flow of new ideas, new places and reinvention.

At the top end of the food chain, fine diners thrive. You'll find menus rove across regions rather than slavishly following the posh Anglo-French model. There are those that closely follow a contemporary French direction, such as *Vue du Monde* (p128) but you're more likely to see a thoughtful pan-Mediterranean menu, like that of the *Botanical* (p141). Others incorporate Asian ideas and flavours in what is often termed *Mod Oz*: Andrew McConnell at his legendary Carlton restaurant *Three, One, Two* (at time of writing relocating to Gertrude

St, Fitzroy with a name change) and at *Circa* at the Prince (p139), *Fed Square's Taxi* (p129), *Ezard* at Adelphi (p128) and *Richmond's Pearl* (p134) to name a few. Upmarket Italian is done well: old school at *Market Fiorentino Grill* (p129) or casual at *Becco* (p129). Eastern Mediterranean is done with five-star flair at *Greg Malouf's Momo* (due to open in late 2008; see [www.momorestaurant.com.au](http://www.momorestaurant.com.au)) or *Maha* (p130). The *Press Club* (p129) and *Mini* (p129) champion Mod Greek dining. While many Melbourne chefs experiment widely, mixing and matching technique and ingredient, you'll rarely find chefs doing fusion for providence and context.

Given that there's so much to try, Melburnians love to eat out often. The city really shines when it comes to a more informal, grazing style of dining and you'll find that quality produce and attention to detail don't flag. Small and large plates override the standard three course chronology, flavours sing and everyone digs in. Bar food is no longer seen as a mere consort to booze, nowadays it's an equal marriage of tastes and experiences. It's something that locals love to do, but it's also a great way for visitors to taste some of the city's best cooking without the credit-card king-hit of a fine dining dinner. Pub grub is also popular, and ranges from what constitutes full-blown restaurants in a pub environment to a basic counter-meal service with heartily nostalgic dishes such as bangers and mash, steaks, roasts and the ubiquitous multicultural chimera, the chicken parma (a flattened chicken breast served in loose appropriation of the Sicilian *parmiggiana* style).

There's also no shortage of *really* casual food that's done with the love and attention and is great value for money. A steaming bowl of pho, a square of spanakopita, a teriyaki salmon inari or a provolone and prosciutto piadina will probably leave you change from a tenner, but not leave you in any doubt of Melbourne's status as a food city. And while some Melburnians lunch on wan sandwiches at their desks, there's also plenty who are slurping noodles or hoeing into a slice of very good pizza.

Cafés are an integral part of life, with many Melburnians up early so they can catch up with colleagues (or just the newspaper) over a coffee and a slice of sourdough toast before the work day begins. Coffee quality is hotly debated; everyone has a favourite roaster and

## MELBOURNE CHEFS TO TAKE AWAY

*MoVida; Spanish Culinary Adventures* (Frank Camorra & Richard Cornish)

The recipe for Camorra's divinely light flaky *empanada* pastry is worth the sticker-price alone. The bright pages provide a wealth of tapas recipes as well as capturing the verve of this evergreen laneway bar.

*The Press Club* (George Calombaris)

Beautifully photographed and laid out, George Calombaris' inspired take on Greek cooking at the Press Club (p129), jumps from the pages of this lovely book. His recipes cover all aspects of the cuisine, and the book includes a chapter on ouzo.

*Arabesque* (Greg & Lucy Malouf)

The force behind Melbourne's happening Modern Middle Eastern scene, Greg Malouf co-wrote this exquisite book with his ex, Lucy. It's now been in print for several years, bringing the exciting flavours, techniques and culinary traditions of his Lebanese heritage to a new audience.

*My French Vue: Bistro Cooking at Home* (Shannon Bennett)

Shannon Bennett's degustation dining belongs strictly to the don't-try-this-at-home camp of cooking, but this book concentrates on bistro staples. The recipes have his signature creative twist but are explained thoughtfully and with a nod to solid traditions.

*Lotus Asian Flavours* (Teague Ezard)

Learn all the tricks to conjure up great hawker dishes, curries and fragrant salads. Ezard has a wonderful take on Southeast Asian flavours, which is on show at his casual restaurant Gingerboy (p129), and in this book shows a knack for demystifying techniques for a non-Asian audience.

*Cook's Companion* (Stephanie Alexander)

Although she no longer graces the city's stoves on a regular basis, Alexander's work continues via her writing, community programs and lasting influence on a whole generation of chefs. This is one of Australia's most well-thumbed cookbooks.

*Cooking from Memory: A Journey Through Jewish Food* (Hayley Smorgon, Gaye Weeden & Natalie King)

Not exactly a chef's book, but a collection of culinary journeys collected from 21 cooks. It's filled with recipes and stories that reflect the breadth and complexity of Australia's Jewish community, and show the lasting influence they have had on Melbourne's culinary landscape.

barista. Melbourne (and indeed most of Australia) wipes the floor with the coffee you'll get in London or Los Angeles – you'll need to hotfoot it to Milan to do better. And while the big chains like Starbucks have sprung up, they are shunned by locals who can't imagine why you need a cookie-cutter multinational to tell you how it's done when we've been getting the crème correct for well over 20 years. Soy coffee is polarising; some purist cafés refuse to offer it, along with skim or 'skinny' milk, while it forms a large part of many other's trade. Within the soy camp, there's two schools: Bonsoy and Vitasoy. These different brands of soy milk produce widely different tastes so it's worth noting which is used and deciding which (if either) you prefer.

Produce-wise, Queen Victoria Market (p57) and its suburban counterparts in South Melbourne (p91) and Prahran (p86), are beloved by locals for their fresh fruit and vegetables,

meat and fish, as well as their groaning deli counters. There is also a weekly rota of **Farmers Markets** (www.mfm.com.au), which bring local suppliers and fresh produce to town. They make for a pleasant Saturday morning coffee and food-related stroll.

## VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

While Melbourne doesn't have the shout-out vegan culture of Los Angeles or New York, vegetarians and vegans will have no trouble finding at least a few dishes on most menus that will please and no one will look askance at special requests. A few fine dining restaurants offer vegetarian degustation options, including Ezard at Adelphi (p128) and Jacques Reymond (p141), and while both of these are not vegan, with advance warning they can be made

dairy-free. Carlton's legendary Shakahari (p138) is one of the city's longest-running vegetarian places and it's both fancy enough for a night out but casual enough if you're just looking for a quick but lovingly prepared bite.

Most Asian restaurants will have large meat-free menus, but you'll need to be clear that you don't want oyster or fish sauce used, as these are common additions in Chinese, Vietnamese and Thai cooking. Japanese places, especially the more casual ones (see Alt-Japanese, p135) also have many vegetarian options, though again you'll need to ask if they can prepare your dish with *dashi*, or stock, that hasn't been made with bonito. Lunch in the **Fo Guang Yuan Tea House** (☎ 9642 2388; 141 Queen St, City) is guaranteed vegan; they also have a wonderful range of healing tea. Inner neighbourhoods also have their fair share of exclusively vego restaurants. In Fitzroy look for the big bustling **Veggie Bar** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9417 6935; www.vegiebar.com.au; 380 Brunswick St, Fitzroy), **Bala's** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9416 4077; 406 Brunswick St), **Soul Food** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9419 2949; www.soulfoodcafe.com.au; 273 Smith St, Fitzroy) and the **Moroccan Soup Bar** (p136). In St Kilda try **Soulmama** (p140), **Bala's** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 95346116; 1C Shakespeare Grove, St Kilda) and **Lentil as Anything** (p141).

## COOKING COURSES & TOURS

**Queen Victoria Market** has its own cooking school (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9326 5048; www.qvm.com.au/cook\_ing\_school.php; 69 Victoria St, City) with short demonstration classes featuring local chefs and cookery writers. The range is wide and provides a great snapshot of the city's current culinary obsessions.

Prahran Market's **Essential Ingredient** (Map pp84–5; ☎ 9827 9047; www.theessentialingredient.com.au; Elizabeth St, South Yarra) has a well-regarded cooking school featuring Melbourne chefs with classes ranging from demonstrations to weekend workshops (\$65 to \$275) and will suit happy amateurs to kitchen pros.

**Tony Tan's** (off Map pp84–5 ☎ 9827 7347; www.tonytan.com.au; 28A Lansell Rd, Toorak) cooking school has classes that cover everything from Nonya secrets and effortless Cantonese to Mod Med, spice therapy and the something entitled 'sexy healthy'. His knowledge of Asian cuisines is consummate; he also has guest chefs from both Melbourne and around the country.

Learn how to make the perfect coffee with **Lavazza Coffee Training** (☎ 1300 307 171; www.coffeeclass.com). Courses run for three hours and are geared for either for the home user (\$95) or the professional (\$125). Are you experienced? Then do a postgrad in froth (\$75) or grind (\$125).

For tours, look to **Alan Campion** (☎ 0408-555 679; www.melbournefoodtours.com), author of the *Foodies' Guide to Melbourne*, who shares his knowledge of the city's food culture either by foot or bus. **Suzie Wharton** (☎ 9686 4655; www.chocoholictours.com.au) organises a range of popular chocolate tours. Chef and food writer **Meera Freeman** (☎ 9348 2221; www.meerafreeman.com.au) will take you on a three-hour tour of Richmond's Vietnamese precinct if you can organise a group of six to 12 (\$75 per person). Learn about ingredients such as tiger lily buds and fish maw, and finish with a lunch of authentic specialties. If you are a long-term visitor, she also holds Italian, Thai, Vietnamese and North African cooking classes that run over four weeks in her fabulously stylish studio.

## PRACTICALITIES HOURS

Cafés and restaurants often open seven days a week, although some are closed on Sundays and/or Mondays. It's unusual for restaurants to open for lunch on a Saturday.

Cafés serve food all day and can open as early as 6.30am, especially in the city. Unless they also function as a bar or restaurant, they will start packing up at around 4pm. Restaurants serve lunch from noon to around 3pm and dinner from 6pm to around 10pm. It's always worth checking what time the kitchen closes if you are eating late. Many places will also offer an all-day bar meal that fills the midafternoon gap, as well as a supper menu. Only hours that deviate substantially from these will be mentioned in the reviews.

## PRICE GUIDE

The price ranges for food in this book use the \$ symbol to indicate the cost of a two-course meal for one person, excluding drinks.

\$	under \$20
\$\$	\$20-50
\$\$\$	over \$50

## BOOKING A TABLE

Most restaurants take reservations for both lunch and dinner. For the best restaurants, try to book at least a week ahead (more for weekends), but it's not unheard of to sneak in with a few hours' notice. Some, such as **Vue du Monde** and the **Flower Drum**, often require a booking at least a month in advance. It's increasingly popular for restaurants *not* to take bookings, which is handy if you want to eat early or are happy to wait at the bar.

## TIPPING

Hospitality staff in Australia have the 'luxury' of a minimum wage, so tipping is not compulsory and is usually based on the level of service you receive. That said, they often rely on tips to supplement what can be a pretty paltry living, depending on the establishment. If service is okay, leave around 10%; if it's exceptional, a little more. Cafés do not generally expect tips but will sometimes have a jar on the counter for you to show your love with loose change.

## CENTRAL MELBOURNE

Cafés spring into life at dawn during the week, and there's many places catering to the lunch needs of the city's workers and shoppers. **Swanston St**, north of **Bourke St**, is popular with students. Restaurants rarely rely on views (Taxi is a notable exception) and are spread throughout the city, with many hidden down alleys, in arcades or off the 'Little' streets.

### VUE DE MONDE

Map pp52-3 French, Modern Australian \$\$\$  
☎ 9691 3888; www.vuedemonde.com.au; 430 Little Collins St; lunch/dinner menu gourmand from \$100/150; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Fri, dinner Sat

## ETHNIC EATS

Melbourne's ethnic cuisines were once tightly zoned, and although now spread widely over the city, there are still dedicated clusters. **Richmond's Victoria St** is packed with Vietnamese restaurants and providores; the western suburb of **Footscray** also draws those looking for the most authentic Vietnamese – as well as great African – food. **Lygon St**, **Carlton** has long been home to simple red-sauce Italian cooking, with a few notable innovators, and the coffee and delis are great. **Chinatown** is home to one of Australia's most renowned restaurants of any culinary persuasion, the **Flower Drum** (opposite). You'll find regional gems such as **Dainty Sichuan** (p131) as well as Japanese, Malaysian and Korean here too. One street up, **Lonsdale St** has a handful of Greek tavernas and bars. The northern suburb of **Brunswick** has a number of wonderful Middle Eastern bakers and grocers, as well as cafés. What's off the boil? Thai food often lacks the zing of that's found in **Sydney**, there's not a lot of upmarket Indian to be had, and (at the time of writing) nothing in the way of **Modern Scando**. But it's only a matter of time.

# top picks

## PIZZA

- **Ladro** (p136)
- **Pizza e Birra** (p140)
- **DOC** (p138)
- **I Carusi II** (p140)

Melbourne's favoured spot for occasion dining isn't stuffy; although set in a 19th-century barrister's chamber, the space is starkly luxe. This is degustation dining with a capital D: you choose how much gastronomic immersion you're up for and courses will be tailored accordingly. Two course lunch specials are available too (\$55). Book ahead. If you're after something a little less rigorous, **Bistro Vue** (☎ 9691 3838) does brilliant French staples (goose-fat *frites* anyone?) in a riotous rendition of haute-bourgeois décor. The shopfront **Café Vue** (☎ 9691 3899) is open Mon-Fri from 7am and does astonishingly good-value breakfasts, brunches and lunch boxes (not to mention perfect Illy coffee and amazing pastries).

### EZARD AT ADELPHI

Map pp52-3 Modern Australian \$\$\$  
☎ 9639 6811; www.ezard.com.au; 187 Flinders Lane; mains \$45; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat  
Teague Ezard runs one of the city's enduring fine dining rooms. The space, a lanky basement beneath the **Adelphi Hotel**, is elegant but not as desperately fashion-forward as some. The food has an emphasis on Chinese and Thai flavours, though not exclusively so. Ezard's plating is bold, his

pairings inspired. An eight-course tasting menu (\$135; \$115 for the vegetarian option) is available as well as à la carte.

### TAXI

Map pp52-3 Modern Australian \$\$\$  
☎ 9654 8808; www.transporthotel.com.au; Level 1, Transport Hotel, Federation Sq; mains \$40-45; ☺ lunch & dinner

It takes a space this big to accommodate the reputation of head chef **Michael Lambie**. He creates audacious Asian-inspired dishes that have earned him a loyal following. The sushi menu is one of the city's finest. All glass, steel and concrete, the hangar-sized dining room looks over the river and **Flinders Street Station**. It's stagy, or as some Melburnians might mumble, a little bit 'Sydney'. After dinner, sip a *digestif* at **Transit** and watch the lights sparkle.

### FLOWER DRUM

Map pp52-3 Chinese \$\$\$  
☎ 9662 3655; 17 Market Lane; mains \$35-55; ☺ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner daily  
The **Flower Drum** continues to be Melbourne's most celebrated Chinese restaurant. The finest, freshest produce prepared with absolute attention to detail keeps this Chinatown institution booked out for weeks in advance. The sumptuous but ostensibly simple Cantonese food is delivered with the slick service you'd expect in such elegant surrounds.

### PRESS CLUB

Map pp52-3 Modern Greek \$\$\$  
☎ 9677 9677; 72 Flinders St; mains \$35-45; ☺ lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily

Melbourne's Mod-Greek scene is thriving, and **George Calombaris'** grand city space gives it the glamour it deserves. There's no fusion fussing, but rather a respect for the basics and a creative, playful sensibility. Think *dolmades* stuffed with roast quail, salmon cooked slowly in *tzatziki* and served with almond *skordalia*, or the 'Santorini breakfast' dessert (honey sorbet, yoghurt jelly and walnut biscuit). The separate bar area has a wonderful snacks menu that gives you a sense of the food without blowing the budget. Bookings required.

### GROSSI FLORENTINO GRILL

Map pp52-3 Italian \$\$  
☎ 9662 1811; www.grossiflorentino.com; 80 Bourke St; mains \$35; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat  
The Grill won't wow you with culinary curiosity, but it does offer an authentic regional

Italian menu with metropolitan flair and great produce. The **Cellar Bar** next door is brooding, intimate and affordable: a great place to have a quick bowl of pasta and a glass of pinot grigio. Service is snappy and professional. If you're into grand statements (with mains hitting the \$50 mark), upstairs is an opulent fine dining stalwart.

### GINGERBOY

Map pp52-3 Modern Hawker \$\$  
☎ 9662 4200; www.gingerboy.com.au; 27-29 Crossley St; small dishes \$12-14, large dishes \$30-35; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat  
Brave the aggressively trendy surrounds and weekend party scene, as talented **Teague Ezard** does a fine turn in flash hawker cooking. Flavours pop in dishes such as scallops with green chilli jam or coconut kingfish with peanut and tamarind dressing. There are two dinner sittings, and bookings are required. Otherwise nab a seat at the bar and get eating. Don't overlook the sublime desserts: coconut tapioca topped with paw paw and lime salad or five spice ice cream will make for fond food memories.

### MINI

Map pp52-3 Modern Greek \$\$  
☎ 9650 8830; 141 Flinders Lane; mains \$29-35; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat  
This warm, contemporary basement space does earthy, authentic Greek food that goes way beyond the dips and spit roast clichés. Seafood, pastries and interesting vegetable sides are all fresh and delicious, and the Greek wine list surprises too.

### SARTI RESTAURANT BAR

Map pp52-3 Italian \$\$\$  
☎ 9639 7822; 6 Russell Pl; mains \$29-35; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat  
There's a lot of *ciao bella* schmooze going on, but the menu doesn't just flirt – it delivers. A joyful mix of the knowingly modern and rustically nostalgic: wild harvested venison is prettily parsed with pickled beetroot, celeriac puree and crispy beets or a perfect pistachio panna cotta is embellished with salted popcorn. Or a plate of pasta (\$24) on the terrace makes for a soothing city lunch.

### BECCO

Map pp52-3 Modern Italian \$\$\$  
☎ 9663 3000; www.becco.com.au; 11-25 Crossley St; mains \$28-39; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat  
Airy, bright **Becco** is a long-established favourite with a top end of town clientele.



Staff are attentive and the menu is faultless, straight-up-and-down Italian. The laneway locale with wide window frontage ups the see-and-be-seen factor.

### COMME KITCHEN

Map pp52–3 Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 9631 4000; www.comme.com.au; 7 Alfred Place; small plates \$16–23, large plates \$28–35;

☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat  
Comme does great produce-driven European dishes that eschew prissiness in favour of robust flavours. The space is grand but not stuffy. It's unashamedly chic, filled with statement contemporary furniture and black-clad locals lounging on the broad banquettes.

### TRUNK

Map pp52–3 Italian \$\$

☎ 9663 7994; www.trunktown.com.au; 275 Exhibition St; mains \$28–35; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat

Trunk turns into a prime CBD watering hole on Friday nights, but don't let Bryan from the marketing department put you off. The building is over a hundred years old and was once a synagogue. It's had a thoughtful, witty fit-out and the seasonal pan-Italian menu is very now, while retaining an endearingly rustic edge. Bar snacks such as salt cod and green chilli fritters are great too.

### LONGRAIN

Map pp52–3 Thai \$\$\$

☎ 9671 3151; www.longrain.com; 44 Little Bourke St; mains \$25–40; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat

The Wegner chairs and raw décor are fabulous, but like its Sydney sibling, the off-hand service, big-night-outers and woo-woo ear candy can make a chore out of getting your fill of the best Thai food in town. It's best at lunch, when you can book a table or bolt a few trout-topped betel leaves and gin slings at the bar.

### GILL'S DINER

Map pp52–3 Modern European \$\$\$

☎ 9670 7214; rear, 360 Little Collins St; mains around \$25; ☎ lunch Mon, lunch & dinner Tue–Fri, dinner Sat

Tucked up the back of the Commercial Bakery, Gill's postindustrial pastiche is an immediate charmer. Add old vinyl and freshly baked bread to the mix and it makes for an archetypal Melbourne moment. Lunch can be as simple as smoked

salmon and *prosecco*; dinners are hearty, simple European fare – squid ink pasta, cotechino duck – done with effervescent flair. Details are attended to: the *clafouti* (custard) is individually baked to order and made with the most deliciously sour cherries.

### SEAMSTRESS

Map pp52–3 Modern Chinese \$\$

☎ 9663 6363; www.seamstress.com.au; 113 Lonsdale St; mains \$24–35; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat

Start off with a cocktail under a canopy of tiny *qipao* on the top floor, then make your way downstairs to the dining room for some contemporary Chinese cooking. The food – coconut and roe rice balls, curly-fried snapper or Onkaparinga venison with Szechuan pepper and a Chinese wine reduction – is as delicious as it sounds. The 19th-century warehouse, complete with rickety wooden stairs, is fabulously atmospheric. Their basement bar *Sweatshop* could be on the cards when you're done.

### CUMULUS INC

Map pp52–3 Modern Australian \$\$\$

www.cumulusinc.com.au; 45 Flinders Lane; mains \$21–32; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon–Sat

Pascale Gomes-McNabb, Andrew McConnell and new partner Jayden Ong have created a casual, ever-changing city space to really settle into. The focus is on beautiful produce and simple but artful cooking: from breakfasts of sardines and smoked tomato on toast at the marble bar to suppers of freshly shucked clair de lune oysters tucked away on the leather banquettes.

### MAHA

Map pp52–3 Middle Eastern \$\$

☎ 9629 5900; www.mahabg.com.au; 21 Bond St; small dishes \$8–10, large dishes \$20–26; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat

This is a sexy subterranean space that's great for lunch or dinner but even better for a late-night supper (the kitchen stays open until 3am Thursday to Saturday). It pays homage to the richness and complexity of Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean cooking, but is done with a light, modern touch. Chef Shane Delia's Maltese heritage gets a look in too – rabbit is seldom off the menu.

### JOURNAL CANTEEN

Map pp52–3 Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9650 4399; mezzanine, 253 Flinders Lane;

mains \$18; ☎ lunch Mon–Fri

Journal Canteen, tucked away up an obscure flight of stairs off the CAE building foyer, is no secret. It's packed to the rafters each lunchtime with diners lapping up Rosa Mitchell's sensational Sicilian-style antipasto plates, pastas, roasts and *ragus*. Be spared the agony of choice: Rosa bases her few offerings on what is fresh and seasonal on any given day. There's a \$30 degustation deal, which comes with a complimentary *caffitere*-brewed coffee.

### COOKIE

Map pp52–3 Thai \$\$\$

☎ 9663 7660; 1st fl, 252 Swanston St;

mains \$15–30; ☎ lunch & dinner

The Thai menu isn't the only surprise at this noisy, crowd-pleasing beer hall. The wine list is huge and features interesting by-the-glass drops from around the world, as well as a menu of spritzers that aren't just for mature ladies. Grab an Udinese (pinot grigio, soda and a twist) to go with prawns and lemongrass-scented coconut custard and then a wine flight to see you through your snapper curry. Bar side, you can't go past the DIY 'bliss bombs' – betel leaves to wrap around some very tasty morsels.

### HAKO JAPANESE

Map pp52–3 Japanese \$\$

☎ 9620 1881; 310 Flinders Lane; mains \$15–30;

☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, dinner Sat

This Japanese restaurant, housed in a laneway warehouse space, is more downtown Tokyo than Kyoto tea ceremony. Lunch is a simple affair, with city workers opting for the fresh and tasty lunch set. Dinner sees Masahiro Horie pushing the menu beyond the basics; go for his specials to get the full measure of his talent.

### SUPPER INN

Map pp52–3 Chinese \$\$\$

☎ 9663 4759; 15 Celestial Ave; mains \$15–30;

☎ dinner

No-one minds queuing on the stairs to wait for a high-turnover table in the unglamorous upstairs dining room (especially as downstairs is cramped and clamorous). Bored waiters dressed in black and white, and dated décor don't detract: you're here for the top-quality Cantonese food. Open until 2.30am, Supper Inn is also a favoured after-drinks stop.

### SUNGS KITCHEN

Map pp52–3 Chinese \$\$\$

☎ 9329 2636; www.sungskitchen.com.au;

118 Franklin St; mains \$15–23; ☎ lunch & dinner

This bright and bustling pan-Chinese restaurant offers a beyond standard selection of authentic food, including a whole range of duck dishes (tea-smoked is a favourite) and some interesting vegetarian offerings. They do yum cha and have an extensive tea menu including those with pretty floating flowers.

### DAINTY SICHUAN

Map pp52–3 Chinese \$\$

☎ 9663 8861; 26 Corrs Lane; mains \$12–25;

☎ lunch Mon–Fri, dinner Sat & Sun

This hidden restaurant has a cult-like following and might just claim you too, if you like it hot. Chilli oil, dried chillies, ground chilli seeds, Sichuan peppercorns and well, chillies, join other less than dainty flavourings such as peanuts and vinegar to give you a range of pork, chicken and beef dishes that will rock your world. Bookings advised.

### MOVIDA

Map pp52–3 Spanish \$\$\$

☎ 9663 3038; www.movida.com.au; 1 Hosier Lane;

tapas \$4–6, raciones \$10–17; ☎ lunch & dinner

Movida is nestled in a cobbled laneway emblazoned with one of the world's densest collections of street art; it doesn't get much more Melbourne than this. Line up along the bar, cluster around little window tables or, if you've booked, take a table in the dining area. Tapas' tired reputation will be dispelled by one look at Frank Camorra's menu. It highlights regional styles and surprises with little treats such as *piquillo* peppers filled with crab and potato or mackerel served with pine-nut gazpacho sorbet.

### BAR LOURINHÁ

Map pp52–3 Tapas \$\$\$

☎ 9663 7890; www.barlourinha.com.au; 37 Little Collins St; tapas \$9–15 ☎ lunch & dinner Mon–Fri, Sat dinner

Matt McConnell's wonderful northern Spanish-Portuguese specialities have the swagger and honesty of an Iberian shepherd, but with a cluey, metropolitan touch. Start light with the melting, zingy kingfish pancetta and finish with the hearty house-made chorizo or baked *morcilla* (blood sausage). There's an intriguing wine list sourced from the region too. Come Friday night, the sardines are not just on the plate; but a lone spoonful

of the Arabesque *crema* (custard) is worth the squeeze and the service is always accommodating.

### YU-U Map pp52–3 Japanese \$\$

☎ 9639 7073; 137 Flinders Lane; small dishes \$8-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri

The sign is the size of a postage stamp and the doorway nondescript, so it's easy to miss. This sparsely elegant basement restaurant does smart Japanese fare, artfully presented and assuredly delivered. Go for the set-lunch menu (\$15) of *bento* boxes, soup and noodles. Dinner is a progression of small dishes that can challenge and delight.

### ITALIAN WAITERS CLUB

Map pp52–3 Italian \$

☎ 9650 1508; 1st fl, 20 Meyers Pl; mains \$15-18; ☎ lunch & dinner

Down a laneway and up some stairs, once inside the Italian Waiters Club you'll feel like you stepped into another era. Opened in 1947, it still bears '50s drapes, wood panelling and Laminex tables. Once only for Italian and Spanish waiters to unwind after work over a game of *scopa* (a card game) and a glass of wine, now everyone from suits to students is allowed in for hearty plates of red-sauce pasta and the regularly changing roster of specials.

### PELLEGRINI'S ESPRESSO BAR

Map pp52–3 Italian, Café \$

☎ 9662 1885; 66 Bourke St; mains \$12-16; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner

The iconic Italian equivalent of a classic '50s diner, Pellegrini's has remained genuinely unchanged for decades. A gleaming coffee machine (often trumpeted as the first in Melbourne) churns out the good stuff. Pick and mix from the variety of pastas and sauces; from the table out the back you can watch it all thrown together from enormous ever-simmering pots. In summer, finish with a ladle of watermelon granita.

### KENZAN@GPO Map pp52–3 Japanese \$

☎ 9663 7767; 350 Bourke St; mains \$10-25; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Thu & Fri

The casual kid sister of posh Kenzan (☎ 9654 8933; 56 Flinders Lane) makes the best sushi rolls in Melbourne. Yes, there's spicy tuna, but they also up the ante with soft-shell crab,

intriguing sesame-coated inside-outies, and a large range of *inari*. All come prewrapped for lasting crunch. There's sashimi, ramen, lunch sets and tea as well.

### LAKSA ME Map pp52–3 Malaysian \$

☎ 9639 9885; www.laksame.com; Shop 1, 16 Liverpool St; mains \$10-14; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Fri, dinner Sat & Sun

One of the city's more eccentric (and, we suspect, ironic) interiors is home to some great Malaysian grub. Laksa is king here (they even do a 'skinny' version), but there are also some out-of-the-ordinary entrée options like Chinese pastry triangles of diakon, yam bean and chive. There's a nice little beer list; wine drinkers will need to BYO.

### SUSHI TEN Map pp52–3 Japanese \$

9639 6296; Port Phillip Arcade, 228 Flinders St; mains \$8-15; ☎ Mon-Fri noon-4pm

This cheap and cheerful Japanese canteen pulls the lunchtime crowds that know the sushi is fresh. They also do a range of simple but authentic soups and rice dishes.

### PIADINA SLOWFOOD Map pp52–3 Café \$

☎ 9662 2277; rear, 57 Lonsdale St; piadinas \$8-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri

Piadina fever took hold in Melbourne a few years back and still simmers away at this small, stealthily sited café. They make their own version of the Romagnan flat bread in house and fold them up with all manner of cleverly concocted combinations. A provolone and roast tomato one beats a regular breakfast toastie hands down (note that they open at 6am); at lunch, the meatball filling is a treat. They also do stews, curries and hearty bakes. Service doesn't take its cue from the titles: it's swift but the atmosphere cruises. There's often Studio One or Fat Freddy tunes in the air and the clientele tends towards the creative.

### CAMY SHANGHAI DUMPLING RESTAURANT Map pp52–3 Chinese \$

☎ 9663 8555; 23-25 Tattersalls Lane; dishes \$6.50; ☎ lunch & dinner

The best fast food in the CBD – wait a few minutes for a table, help yourself to plastic cups of overboiled tea and order a variety of dumplings – in broth, fried or steamed (don't go past the chilli oil

## COFFEE

Melburnians get anxious when there isn't a Gaggia hissing away every 20m, so you'll never be short of options. Here are our city favourites, just in case:

**Brother Baba Budan** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9606 0449; 359 Little Bourke St) Cute city outpost of indie roasters St. Ali (p143). There's coffee, of course, and only the odd ruglach or biscuit to distract you. They also sell beans and a good range of coffee-related equipment.

**Café Vue** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9691 3899; 430 Little Collins St) Excellent Illy coffee and a wondrous range of cakes, pastries and sandwiches. Join the cult that's sprung up around the pistachio cupcakes.

**Commerical Bakery** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9670 7214; rear, 360 Little Collins St) Sweet things fresh from the oven sing a siren song: don't come here if a little sweet thing is out of the question.

**Degraves** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9654 1245; Degraves St) Long-time latte champs keep it calm during the rush; chase a short black with a Bloody Mary if it's one of those mornings/early afternoons. The muffins are magnificent too.

**Federal Coffee Palace** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9662 2224; GPO, Elizabeth St) Atmosphere plus, with tables beneath the colonnades of the GPO and the fashion retailer fave. Space heaters keep you toasty when the city turns chilly.

**Journal Canteen** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 9650 4399; Level 1, 253 Flinders Lane) Sweetly redolent of a library from days gone by, this is great place for wasting time. Coffee, of course, but also wine and good value meals.

**Pellegrini's Espresso Bar** (Map pp52–3; opposite) The coffee-in-a-tumbler fascination began here for most Melburnians over 40, and they're still serving it strong and with love. Granitas are great too.

**Pushka** (Map pp52–3; 20 Pesgrave Pl, off Howey Pl) Relaxed hipster hideaway with home-away-from-home charm, excellent coffee and Portuguese custard tarts. Just keep on going up that alley.

**Superfino** (Map pp52–3; ☎ 0407-773 754; 275 Flinders Lane) Hole in the wall deli-café that's stuffed to the rafters with provisions to fuel up hungry office workers.

**Switchboard** (Map pp52–3; Manchester Unity Arcade, 220 Collins St) Beneath the Man-U mosaics, there's Nana-style wallpaper, cupcakes and a coffee machine in a cupboard.

variety) – and some greens. This is one of the last places in town you can fill up for under \$10.

### DON DON Map pp52–3 Japanese \$

☎ 9670 3377; 321 Swanston St; mains \$6-8; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri

Students, retailers and city kids storm the door come lunch at this uptown Japanese outlet. From the counter, order good quality *bento* boxes and bowls of curry and noodles; vegetarian options are also available, then keep up the pace and woof it down.

## SOUTHBANK & DOCKLANDS

If you're looking for flash, sparkle and a water view, you're in the right place. Many of the places you'll find in these areas are more about investment dollars than creative obsession, but Southbank, Docklands and even Crown do have some fabulous and surprisingly good-value dining options. New Quay's offerings are also delightfully diverse.

### ROCKPOOL BAR & GRILL

Map pp64–5 Steak, Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 8648 1900; www.rockpoolmelbourne.com; Crown Complex, Whiteman St, Southbank; mains \$20-150; ☎ lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily

The Melbourne outpost of Perry's empire offers his signature seafood raw bar, but it's really all about beef, from grass-fed to full-blood wagyu. This darkly masculine space is simple and stylish, as is the menu. Even a side of humble mac'n'cheese is done with startlingly fab ingredients. The bar provides a respite from the formality of the dining room, but offers the same level of food service.

### GIUSEPPE, ARNALDO AND SONS

Map pp64–5 Italian \$\$

☎ 9694 7400; Crown Complex, Whiteman St, Southbank; mains \$28-33; ☎ noon-midnight Prodigal (and preternaturally talented) Maurizio Terzini sold Melbourne's *café e cucina* concept to Sydney and now he's brought North Bondi Italian back south. It's a splendid space – with the drama of a marble bar hung with small goods

## CROWN HEIGHTS

As well as Giuseppe, Arnaldo and Sons (p133) and Rockpool Bar & Grill (p133), the Crown Casino complex also boasts the following eating options:

**Bistro Guillaume** (Map pp64–5; ☎ 9693 3888; www.bistroguillaume.com.au; mains \$25–120; ☺ lunch & dinner) Sydney's famed Frenchman does bistro food with fine-dining flair, star local recruit Philippa Sibley is the pudding queen.

**Nobu** (Map pp64–5; ☎ 9696 6566; www.noburestaurants.com; mains \$20–200; ☺ lunch & dinner) We're still not sure if Melbourne really needed a Nobu in the first place, but it's a seductive space for those out to impress.

**Brasserie by Philippe Mouchel** (Map pp64–5; mains \$29–100; ☎ 9292 7808; www.thebrasserieatcrown.com.au; ☺ lunch & dinner) Local chef's French comfort food is probably just what you'll need when the roulette table has got the better of you.

**Koko** (Map pp64–5; ☎ 9292 6886; www.kokoatcrown.com.au; mains \$34–200; ☺ lunch & dinner) Very traditional Japanese dining with ultra-fresh fish, teppanyaki and a sake bar.

and a spot-lit bread station – and but be prepared for some noise and bustle. Food is enticing, stunningly fresh and exciting, while retaining a produce-driven simplicity. The menu is flexible and great for sharing.

## TUTTO BENE

 (Map pp64–5) Italian \$\$

☎ 9696 3334; www.tuttobene.com.au; Midlevel, Southgate; mains \$18–36; ☺ lunch & dinner There's other *primi piatti* on offer but the main event here is risotto. They range from a simple Venetian *risi e bisi* (rice and peas) to some fabulously luxe options involving truffles or roast quail or aged balsamic. Fine house-made gelato is the requisite desert; you can drop in anytime just for a *coppa* scooped from an outside servery.

## MECCA BAH

 (Map pp64–5) Middle Eastern \$\$

☎ 9642 1300; www.meccabah.com; 55a New Quay Promenade; mains \$17–20; ☺ lunch & dinner This opulent hexagon-shaped restaurant serves Turkish pizza and a selection of mezze all day. Their mains – mostly tagines and grills – are hearty and spicy (welcome when the wind is whipping up the bay outside), as are the open Bedouin-style fireplaces.

## BOPHA DEVI

 (Map pp64–5) Cambodian \$\$

☎ 9600 1887; www.bophadevi.com; 27 Rakaia Way, Docklands; mains \$15–25; ☺ lunch & dinner The modern Cambodian food here is a delightful mix of novel and familiar Southeast Asian flavours and textures. Herb-strewn salads, noodles and soups manage to be both fresh and filling.

## BHOJ

 (Map pp64–5) Indian \$\$

☎ 9600 0884; www.bhoj.com.au; 54 New Quay Promenade; mains \$10–25; ☺ lunch & dinner Dockland locals are lucky: they're sitting on Melbourne's best Indian. Posh surroundings don't dim the authentic flavours. Order up big: the Konkan fish curry is great, as are the standard dhals, naans and tandoori dishes. The lunch menu is a steal. Service is charming but can be slow.

## EAST MELBOURNE & RICHMOND

Richmond's main draw is restaurant-packed Victoria St. Most places here offer a similar menu with a long list of Vietnamese and Chinese favourites, and there are also a number of *pho* shops.

## PEARL

 (Map pp68–9) Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 9421 4599; www.pearlrestaurant.com.au; 631–633 Church St, Richmond; mains \$35–48; ☺ lunch & dinner daily; ☑ South Yarra, ☑ 69 Owner-chef Geoff Lindsay proclaims himself 'a fifth-generation Aussie boy who is seduced by ginger, chilli and palm sugar, Turkish delight, chocolate and pomegranate'. We're seduced too: his exquisitely rendered food really does epitomise Modern Australian cooking. The space is slick but comfortable, service is smart, and the bar, which stays open till midnight, jumps with the fashion crowd from across the river.

## PACIFIC SEAFOOD BBQ HOUSE

(Map pp68–9) Chinese \$\$

☎ 9427 8225; 240 Victoria St, Richmond; mains \$15–25; ☺ lunch & dinner daily; ☑ North Richmond, ☑ 24, 109

Seafood in tanks and script-only menus on coloured craft paper make for an authentic, fast and fabulous dining experience. Tank-fresh fish is done simply, perhaps steamed with ginger and greens, and washed down with Chinese beer. Book, or be ready to queue.

## RICHMOND HILL CAFE & LARDER

(Map pp68–9) Mediterranean \$\$

☎ 9421 2808; www.rhcl.com.au; 48–50 Bridge Rd, Richmond; brunch \$12–30; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☑ West Richmond, ☑ 48, 75

A weekend brunch here is worth the queues, not only because you can browse the produce store and rifle the cheese room while you wait. The food is simple, comforting, often surprising and always made with the best seasonal ingredients.

## MIHN MIHN

(Map pp68–9) Vietnamese, Laotian \$\$

☎ 9427 7891; 94 Victoria St, Richmond; mains \$10–18; ☺ lunch Wed–Sun, dinner Tue–Sun; ☑ North Richmond, ☑ 109

Mihn Mihn specialises in fiery Laotian dishes – the herby green and chilli red beef salad is a favourite – but does all the Vietnamese staples too. Service is swift and it's always packed with families, hip kids, students and boys fuelling up for a night out at the Laird Hotel (p178).

## FITZROY & AROUND

Brunswick St's reputation as a place to eat might seem unfounded if you encounter another same old variation on the same old café theme. But there are some gems among the dross. Likewise, Gertrude St has some very in-

## ALT-JAPANESE

We're not sure if it constitutes a trend, but the casual Japanese cafés on the south end of Smith St, Collingwood, just keep multiplying. Funky **Wabi Sabi Salon** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9417 6119; 94 Smith St, Collingwood) and sweet **Peko Peko** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9415 9609; 199 Smith St, Fitzroy) started it all; they've been joined by slick **Wood Spoon Kitchen** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9416 0588; 88 Smith St, Collingwood) and the elegant **Cocoro** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9419 5216; 117 Smith St, Fitzroy), as well as the trad **Tokushima** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9486 9933; 70 Smith St, Collingwood). In the same vein, but serving up bold Korean, is **Goshen** (Map pp74–5; ☎ 9419-6750; 189 Smith St, Fitzroy).

teresting food options, all in a low-key setting, while Smith St offers at least one of everything from pork rolls to *moules frites*.

## OLD KINGDOM

 (Map pp74–5) Chinese \$\$

☎ 9417 2438; 197 Smith St, Fitzroy; around \$50 per duck; ☺ lunch Tue–Fri, dinner Tue–Sun; ☑ 86 The queues are here for three things: duck soup, Peking duck, and duck and bean shoots. The owner's one-man show is a bonus, as is the classic no-style décor. You'll need to preorder for Peking duck.

## ST JUDE'S CELLAR

(Map pp74–5) Modern Australian \$\$

☎ 9419 7411; www.stjudescellars.com.au; 389–391 Brunswick St, Fitzroy; mains around \$30; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue–Sun, breakfast Sat & Sun; ☑ 112 A cavernous warehouse space has been given a clever, cool and humanising fit-out while not losing its airy industrial feel. The restaurant stretches out from behind the shopfront cellar, affording respite from the Brunswick St hustle. The food is a departure from usual restaurant fancy; it could be described as home cooking, though only if you were lucky enough to be shackled up with Elizabeth David. Mains (lentil and rabbit shepherds pie, venison with orange and ginger compote, fish wrapped in vine leaves) are designed to share; accompany them with at least a few of the hearty, inventive vegetable sides.

## PANAMA DINING ROOM

 (Map pp74–5)

Modern European \$\$

☎ 9417 7663; 3rd fl, 231 Smith St, Fitzroy; mains \$18–25; ☺ dinner Wed–Sun; ☑ 86

The Franco-Fitzroy pub grub on offer here is great value and just right over a bottle or two while gawping at the ersatz Manhattan views. The large space also does double duty as a bar, so come early or be prepared for some happy hubbub with your *frites* and *rillettes*.



**MARIOS** Map pp74–5 Café \$  
☎ 9417 3343; 303 Brunswick St, Fitzroy; mains around \$18 ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ 112 Mooching at Marios is part of the Melbourne 101 curriculum. Breakfasts are big and served all day, the service is swift and the coffee is old-school strong.

### MOROCCAN SOUP BAR

Map pp48–9 North African, Vegetarian \$  
☎ 9482 4240; 183 St Georges Rd, North Fitzroy; banquet \$16; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun; ☎ 112 The menu is delivered verbally; dishes consist of authentic recipes served up in Maghrebi surroundings, festooned with cloth and drums. Pay attention (the owner, Hana, can be very stern) and pick your order from three soups and nine mains, which might be vegetables and quince on couscous, a *tagine* or chickpea bake. Local Arab women run the kitchen and it's an alcohol-free zone.

**AUX BATIFOLLES** Map pp74–5 French \$\$  
☎ 9481 5015; 400 Nicholson St, North Fitzroy; mains \$15-26; ☺ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner daily; ☎ 96

This French bistro does the trick for both big occasions or simple weeknight dinners. All the standards are here: duck *confit*, *moules frites* and steak tartare. Desserts too: *crème brûlée* and *tarte Tartin* just the way *maman* used to make. While you won't be wowed by culinary innovation, you'll love the delightful service, careful presentation, hearty serves and very modest prices. Bookings advised.

**COCONUT PALMS** Map pp74–5 Vietnamese \$  
☎ 9419 6429; 183 Smith St, Fitzroy; mains \$12-18; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily; ☎ 86

The specials board may never change, but the above-par Vietnamese standards keep plenty of backsides on the no-frills seats. Famous for their flavour-packed veggie rice-paper rolls, fat silken tofu hotpot, prawn and pork coleslaw, and beef in vine leaves, as well as ever-obliging service.

**LADRO** Map pp74–5 Pizza, Italian \$\$  
☎ 9415 7575; 224a Gertrude St, Fitzroy; mains \$11-30; ☺ dinner Wed-Sun; ☎ 86 Breathtakingly simple, just-right pizza, pasta and roasts pack in a diverse, if polished, crowd every night. Book ahead:

believe us, the Lazio, smeared with an artichoke and anchovy paste and strewn with *fior di latte*, is worth getting organised for.

**CAVALLERO** Map pp74–5 Modern Australian \$\$  
☎ 9417 1377; 300 Smith St, Collingwood; mains \$10-28; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, brunch Sun; ☎ 86

A supersmart, subtle fit-out lets the charm of this grand Victorian shopfront shine. Morning coffee and house-made bikkies make way for piadina and pinot gris. Come teatime, there's pan-Med comfort food, and later still, cocktails, draught beer and dub tunes on the turntable. Sunday brunch goes off.

**PIZZA MEINE LIEBE** off Map pp48–9 Pizza \$  
☎ 9482 7001; 231 High St, Northcote; pizza \$10-18; ☺ dinner Tue-Sun; ☎ 86

While Meine Liebe falls squarely into the 'new pizza' camp, with a wonderful range of simple toppings, it still feels reassuringly old-school, with a central gas oven, simple shopfront space and lots of bustle. Salads and gelato keep the menu suitably simple. For those about to rock (ie if you're seeing an act at the Northcote Social Club), we salute you, but also suggest booking for a preshow pizza.

### COMMONER

Map pp74–5 Modern Mediterranean \$\$  
☎ 9415 6876; www.thecommoner.com.au; 122 Johnston St, Fitzroy; mains \$9-24; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Fri; ☎ 112 If you need to be convinced of this off-street restaurant's serious intent, the house-roasted goat they offer up come Sunday lunch should do it. There's a nice, neat wine list and posh beer to complement the Eastern-Med-inflected dishes. Breakfast dishes too, are out of the ordinary.

**AÑADA** Map pp74–5 Tapas \$\$  
☎ 9415 6101; www.anada.com.au; 197 Gertrude St, Fitzroy; tapas \$3-5, *raciones* \$8-17; ☺ dinner; ☎ 86 Dishes such as mackerel with orange-blossom and pistachio or veal meatballs and braised cuttlefish are alive with hearty Spanish and Muslim Mediterranean flavours. It's unpretentious, passionate cooking and the place fills up most nights. There's the usual arrangement of big and little plates plus a good selection of Iberian wines. Book ahead or try to nab a table at the bar or outside.

### BABKA BAKERY CAFE

Map pp74–5 Bakery, Café \$  
☎ 9416 0091; 358 Brunswick St, Fitzroy; mains \$8-16; ☺ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun; ☎ 112 Russian flavours infuse the lovingly prepared breakfast and lunch dishes, and the heady aroma of cinnamon and freshly baked bread makes even just a coffee worth queuing for. Cakes are notable and can be taken away whole.

**JULIO** Map pp48–9 Café \$  
☎ 9489 7814; 171 Miller St, North Fitzroy; mains \$7-12; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 112

This cute corner café, down by the schoolyard, is off the beaten track but always busy with locals. It keeps them content with fresh sardines on toast, baked eggs and tortilla. Their custard-filled doughnuts are legendary.

### BRUNSWICK STREET ALIMENTARI

Map pp74–5 Café \$  
☎ 94162001; 251 Brunswick St, Fitzroy; mains \$6-10; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 112 Part deli, part fuss-free canteen, Alimentari stocks artisan bread, smallgoods and cheeses. The kitchen serves up delicious Lebanese pies (some love the lamb but we say the silverbeet can't be beat) with *labne*, as well as salads, bruschettas, meatball wraps and homemade cakes.

**PALOMINO** Map pp48–9 Café \$  
☎ 9481 0699; 236 High St, Northcote; mains \$5.50-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 86

Airy café that keeps locals coming back for sourdough toast, coco pops, cupcakes and absolutely zero attitude. Eggs here come baked or boiled in the shell ready for dunking with sourdough soldiers. Loppers face off with spoon crackers: underneath we're all the same. The coffee is the best you'll get north of Merri Creek.

**ROSAMOND** Map pp74–5 Café \$  
☎ 9419 2270; rear, 191 Smith St, Fitzroy; dishes \$5-10; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 86

Rosamond's tiny interior is a warm haven for the local freelance creative crew, who like their daily rations simple but well considered. And that they are: free-range eggs only come scrambled, but with first-rate toast and fresh sides, and there's soup, toasties, baguettes, salads and cupcakes.

**NEWTOWN SC** Map pp74–5 Café \$  
☎ 9415 7337; 180 Brunswick St, Fitzroy; all dishes \$5-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat; ☎ 112 Kate and the gang never tire of making perfect coffee – nabbing the window seat at Newtown isn't always easy. Weekday morns take on a family breakfast feel with avocado on toast the order of the day.

## CARLTON & AROUND

Visitors come to Carlton looking for some *dolce vita*, but instead they often just find spruikers and some very spurious cooking. Fortunately, north of Grattan St there's a more local vibe and far more reliable food. North Melbourne has a nice collection of interesting places as well as a strip of cheap Asian restaurants catering to students along Victoria St. Brunswick is Melbourne's Middle Eastern hub, and its busy **A1 Lebanese Bakehouse** (off Map pp48–9; ☎ 9386 0440; www.a1bakery.com.au; 643-645 Sydney Rd, Brunswick) and **Mediterranean Wholesalers** (Map pp48–9; ☎ 9380 4777; www.leosimports.com.au; 482-492 Sydney Rd, Brunswick) are worth a trip in themselves. Both Sydney Rd and Lygon St, East Brunswick offer a wide range of other cuisines too.

### ESPOSITO AT TOOFEY'S

Map pp78–9 Seafood, Italian \$\$\$  
☎ 9347 9838; www.toofeys.com.au; 162 Elgin St, Carlton; mains \$34-38; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ 1, 8, 96, ☎ 205

There are no ocean views, modish manners or maritime decoration here – just the freshest seafood done with simple Italian style. There's beef and fowl if you're not in the mood for fish, and the desserts, like the rest of the menu, are both clever and seasonal.

### COURTHOUSE HOTEL

Map pp78–9 Pub food \$\$  
☎ 9329 5394; www.thecourthouse.net.au; 86 Errol St, North Melbourne; mains \$30-40; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ 57

This corner pub has managed to retain the comfort and familiarity of a local while taking food, both in its public bar and its more formal dining spaces, very seriously. The European-style dishes are both refined and hearty. Lunch deals, including a glass of wine, are great value, and there is a tasting menu (\$90) at dinner.



**ENOTECA SILENO** Map pp78–9 Italian \$\$

☎ 9389 7070; [www.enoteca.com.au](http://www.enoteca.com.au); 920 Lygon St, Carlton North; mains around \$30; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue–Sat; breakfast & lunch Sun; ☎ 1, 8

This groaning enoteca imports some of the city's best quality Italian provisions; you'll see them employed in the small but smart menu of regional standards. The Italian wines are also exemplary; pick up a bottle and a jar of *carciuga* (artichoke anchovy spread) to take home.

**LIBERTINE** Map pp78–9 French \$\$\$

☎ 9329 5228; [www.libertinedining.com.au](http://www.libertinedining.com.au); 500 Victoria St, North Melbourne; mains \$28–33; ☺ lunch Tue–Fri, dinner Tue–Sat; ☎ 57

Locals love this small, traditionally decked-out shopfront for its real French country cooking and va-va-voom interiors. The menu includes whole suckling pigs (though you'll need to bring nine of your friends to help out with that order) and is requisitely strong on its game and cheeses.

**BALZARI** Map pp78–9 Mediterranean \$\$

☎ 9639 9383; [www.balzari.com.au](http://www.balzari.com.au); 130 Lygon St, Carlton; mains \$25–32; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☎ 1, 8, 96

A nice respite right in the heart of the Lygon St mayhem. This place reaches out to embrace Greek cooking as well as Italian and a few other Mediterranean influences. The space is simple but elegant, and dishes – either entrees or soupy mains – are great to share.

**ABLA'S** Map pp78–9 Lebanese \$\$

☎ 9347 0006; [www.ablas.com.au](http://www.ablas.com.au); 109 Elgin St, Carlton; mains \$25; ☺ lunch Thu & Fri, dinner Mon–Sat; ☎ 1, 8, 96, ☎ 205

The kitchen here is steered by Aba Amad, whose authentic, flavour-packed food has inspired a whole generation of local Lebanese chefs. Bring a bottle of your favourite plonk and settle in for the compulsory banquet on Friday and Saturday night.

**RUMI** Map pp78–9 Modern Middle Eastern \$\$

9388 8255; 132 Lygon St, Brunswick East; mains \$17–22; ☺ dinner Tue–Sat; ☎ 1, 8

A fabulously well-considered place that serves up a mix of traditional Lebanese cooking and contemporary interpretations of old Persian dishes. The *sigara boregi*

(cheese and pine-nut pastries) are a local institution and tasty mains like meatballs are balanced with a large and interesting selection of vegetable dishes (the near-caramelised cauliflower and the broad beans are standouts). Cool décor and excellent Victorian wines are a bonus.

**SHAKAHARI** Map pp78–9 Vegetarian \$\$

☎ 9347 3848; [www.shakahari.com.au](http://www.shakahari.com.au); 201 Faraday St, Carlton; mains \$15–18; ☺ lunch Mon–Sat, dinner daily; ☎ 1, 8, 96, ☎ 205

Shakahari's limited seasonal menu reflects both Asian and European influences, with dishes made from great produce. Established over 20 years ago, and bedecked with a wonderful collection of Asian antiques, Shakahari takes its mission seriously. If the weather is in your favour, ask to be seated in the palm-fringed courtyard. The curries, *tagines* (spicy Moroccan stews) and noodle dishes are delicious, whatever the setting.

**CITRUS MINT** Map pp78–9 Thai \$\$

9329 5568; [www.citrusmint.com.au](http://www.citrusmint.com.au); mains around \$15; 357 Victoria St, North Melbourne; ☎ 57

This neat little place has a menu of Thai standards a notch above the ordinary. Ingredients are fresh and the spicing never muddled. They do a very good-value lunch deal that gives you a choice of a few mains, with rice, a spring roll and a glass of wine, beer or soft drink thrown in.

**DOC** Map pp78–9 Pizza \$\$

☎ 9347 2998; 295 Drummond St, Carlton; pizzas around \$13–18; ☺ dinner daily, lunch & dinner Sun; ☎ 1, 8, 96, ☎ 205

DOC has jumped on the Milanese-led mozzarella bar trend and serves up the milky white balls – your choice of local cow or imported *buffala* – as entrees, in salads or atop fabulous pizzas. Toppings include creamy broccoli puree and prosciutto, bitter-sweet *cicoria* (chicory) and lemon, and the litmus-test *margherita* gets rave reviews. The buffalo milk gelato is a delight or they do dessert pizzas if you're up for double dough.

**CARLTON ESPRESSO**

Map pp78–9 Italian, Café \$

☎ 9347 8482; 326 Lygon St, Carlton; piadinas \$10; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon–Sat; ☎ 1, 8, 96, ☎ 205  
Piadinas and panini are stuffed with a wonderful array of fillings and the little tarts and biscotti are homemade. This place

brims with contemporary Italian brio – a nice change from the drab nostalgia found elsewhere.

**TRE ESPRESSO** Map pp48–9 Café \$

☎ 9381 0209; 459–475 Sydney Rd, Brunswick; mains \$8–15; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ Brunswick, ☎ 19

Part of the new Sparta Place development, which promises much in terms of bars, shops and general Brunswick bonhomie, this café keeps to a simple formula of Italian staples. Paninis, cakes and coffee are supplemented by comforting dishes such as lasagne and risotto if you're in for more than a quick bite. At time of writing they were planning to open for wine evenings; they know their *vino* so it's worth a call.

**RAY** Map pp48–9 Café \$

☎ 9380 8593; 332 Victoria St, Brunswick; meals \$8–12; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ Brunswick, ☎ 19

Ray mashes up the flavour legacy of the neighbourhood with the tastes of the vanguard residents. The big communal table is the place to try *labna* (yoghurt cheese) and rose jam on toasted pide, tomato and *bocconcini* bread and really good coffee.

**SMALL BLOCK** Map pp78–9 Café \$

☎ 9381 2244; 130 Lygon St, Carlton North; mains \$8–12; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 1, 8

With salvaged service-station signage and concrete floors, plus warm and efficient service, Small Block acts as a community centre with a neighbourly drop-in and stay-awhile vibe. Big, beautiful breakfasts (eggs and otherwise) are worth writing home about.

**BRUNETTI** Map pp78–9 Café, Pasticceria \$

☎ 9347 2801; [www.brunetti.com.au](http://www.brunetti.com.au); 194–204 Faraday St, Carlton; panini around \$8; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ 1, 8, 96, ☎ 205

Bustling from dawn to midnight, Brunetti is a mini-Roman empire. It's famous for its coffee, granitas and authentic *pasticceria* (pastries). *Bain-marie* meals can be on the stodgy side (and sometimes that's just what the locals want) but the toasted *tremezzini* always please.

**NORTH CAFETERIA** Map pp78–9 Café

☎ 9348 1276; 717 Rathdowne St, Carlton North; breakfasts \$6–15; ☺ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 1, 8  
Great neighbourhood café that breaks from the north-side mould with a light white in-

terior and wow-factor chairs (Eero Saarinen, if you must know). Breakfast is the thing here and they have really interesting ways with eggs as well as fabulous French toast.

## ST KILDA & AROUND

Fitzroy St is one of the city's most popular eating strips, and you'll find the good, the very good and the downright ugly along its in-your-face length. Acland St also hums with dining options, as well as its famed cake shops. Low-key Carlisle St has more than its fair share of cute cafés and a couple of restaurants that keep the locals happy.

**CAFE DI STASIO** Map pp88–9 Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9525 3999; 31a Fitzroy St, St Kilda; mains \$32–41; ☺ lunch & dinner daily; ☎ 16, 96, 112

Capricious white-jacketed waiters, a tenebrous Bill Henson photograph and a jazz soundtrack set the mood. The Italian menu has the appropriate drama and grace. Weekly fixed-price lunch menus (two courses and a glass of wine) are great value.

**CIRCA AT THE PRINCE**

Map pp88–9 Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 9536 1122; [www.circa.com.au](http://www.circa.com.au); mains \$32–40; Prince of Wales, 2 Acland St, St Kilda; mains around \$40; ☺ breakfast & dinner daily, lunch Sun–Fri; ☎ 16, 96, 112

This dining room has a persistent, all-pervading glamour and produces some of the city's finest food. Exec Chef Andrew McConnell no longer mans the stoves nightly (at time of writing he was busy relocating his famed Carlton restaurant Three One Two to Gertrude St, Fitzroy) but his stamp is all over the menu in its precise, intense tastes and eclectic influences. Bookings required.

**MIRKA'S AT TOLARNO**

Map pp88–9 International, Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9525 3088; [www.mirkatolarno.com](http://www.mirkatolarno.com); Tolarno Hotel, 42 Fitzroy St, St Kilda; mains \$32–36; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner daily; ☎ 16, 96, 112

The dark dining room has a history (it's been delighting diners since the early '60s) and Guy Grossi's carefully tweaked, knowingly retro food – truffle poached eggs, steak tartare, duck à l'orange – adds to the sense of occasion. But you don't get gravitas with your Chateaubriand. Beloved St Kilda painter Mirka Mora's murals grace the wall infusing all with a rare joy de vivre.

**DONOVANS**

Map pp88-9

Modern Mediterranean \$\$\$

☎ 9534 8221; [www.donovanshouse.com.au](http://www.donovanshouse.com.au); 40 Jacka Blvd, St Kilda; mains \$28-45; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 16, 96

Donovans has a big reputation and a marquee location to match. Overlooking the beach, the interior conjures up a comforting Long Island bolthole. The food is far from fussy; rather it's solid on flavour and technique, and broad enough to please all comers. Book well ahead.

**STOKEHOUSE**

Map pp88-9

Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 9525 5555; [www.stokehouse.com.au](http://www.stokehouse.com.au); 30 Jacka Blvd, St Kilda; mains upstairs \$28-32, downstairs \$10-20; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 16, 96

Two-faced Stokehouse makes the most of its beachfront position, cleverly catering to families and drop-ins downstairs, and turning on its best upstairs for finer diners. It's a fixture on the Melbourne dining scene and known for its seafood, service and the bay views on offer. Book for upstairs.

**PIZZA E BIRRA** Map pp88-9

Italian \$\$

☎ 9537 3465; 60 Fitzroy St, St Kilda; mains \$22-28; ☎ dinner Tue-Thu, lunch &amp; dinner Fri-Sun; ☎ 16, 96, 112

The old train station's great bones and the sharp, graphic fit-out make for a lovely night out. Sit under black-and-white photos straight from the *Cinecittà* archives and eat hand-stretched, wood-fired pizzas (both *tradizionali*, with tomato *sugo*, and *bianche*, without) or venture on through their mains of pastas, grills and tasty salads.

**CICCIOLINA**

Map pp88-9

Modern Mediterranean \$\$\$

☎ 9525 3333; [www.cicciolina.com.au](http://www.cicciolina.com.au); 130 Acland St, St Kilda; mains \$19-36; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 16, 96

This warm room of dark wood, subdued lighting and pencil-sketches is a St Kilda institution. The inspired Mod-Med menu is smart and generous, and the service warm. They don't take bookings; eat early or while away your wait in the moody little back bar.

**MR WOLF** Map pp88-9

Pizza \$\$

☎ 9534-0255; [www.mrwolf.com.au](http://www.mrwolf.com.au); 9-15 Inkerman St, St Kilda East; pizza \$18-20; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner Tue-Sun; ☎ 16

Local celeb chef Karen Martin's casual but stylish space is out of the action but always

packed to the gills. The pizzas here are renowned (crisp with top quality ingredients) but there's also a great menu of antipasti and pastas that display her flair for matching ingredients. Don't let the groove factor put you off taking the kids; they have a couple of special *bambini* pizzas and lots of kid-friendly desserts. If there are no little ones in tow, the next-door bar is open late.

**LAU'S FAMILY KITCHEN**

Map pp88-9

Chinese \$\$

☎ 8598 9880; [www.lauskitchen.com.au](http://www.lauskitchen.com.au); 4 Acland St, St Kilda; mains \$16-32; ☎ dinner daily, lunch Sun-Fri; ☎ 16, 96

The owner's family comes with absolutely flawless pedigree (father Gilbert Lau is the former owner of famed Flower Drum) and the restaurant is in a lovely leafy location. The mainly Cantonese menu is simple, and dishes are beautifully done if not particularly exciting, with a few surprises thrown in for more adventurous diners. Super-attentive staff and the moody dark interior make for a great night out.

**SOULMAMA** Map pp88-9

Vegetarian \$\$

☎ 9525 3338; [www.soulmama.com.au](http://www.soulmama.com.au); St Kilda Sea Baths, Shop 10, 10 Jacka Blvd, St Kilda; mains \$15-18; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 16, 96

Despite the stylish organic fittings and large windows with gob-smacking views over Port Phillip Bay, this ethical diner can feel a bit like a campus canteen with its *bain-maries* and quiet posturing. Still, there's a nice flexibility to portion sizes and choice (a standard bowl lets you try four dishes, which tend towards Indian and Asian flavours), a large selection and some very tempting desserts.

**IL FORNAIO** Map pp88-9

Bakery/Café

☎ 9534 2922; [www.ilfornaio.net.au](http://www.ilfornaio.net.au); mains \$14-26; 2 Acland St, St Kilda; ☎ 96, 16

Famous for its bread, croque monsieurs and cakes, Il Fornaio also does simple Italian pastas, risottos and wine at night. The street tables are a St Kilda summer must, or cosy up inside when the wind blows.

**I CARUSI II** Map pp88-9

Pizza \$\$

☎ 9593-6033; 231 Barkly St, St Kilda; pizza \$14-18; ☎ dinner; ☎ 16, 96

Beautifully located beyond the Acland St chaos in this nostalgic corner shop, I Carusi II was opened (though no longer owned

by) one of the people who started the real pizza revolution in Melbourne. I Carusi pizzas have a particularly tasty dough and follow the less-is-more tenet, with top-quality mozza, pecorino and small range of other toppings. Bookings advised.

**WALL TWO 80** Map pp88-9

Café \$

☎ 9593 8280; [www.wallcoffee.com.au](http://www.wallcoffee.com.au); rear, 280 Carlisle St, Balacava; dishes \$8-11; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 3, 69

With a look that was so Melbourne, Sydney had to have one too. Wall Two 80's coffee is some of the best, as are the toasted *pide* and pastries. Prop with other loners at the communal table, nestle in a nook with a mate or line up outside along the eponymous wall.

**PELICAN** Map pp88-9

Tapas \$\$

☎ 9525 5847; cnr Fitzroy &amp; Park Sts, St Kilda; mains \$7-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch &amp; dinner; ☎ 16, 96, 112

This modern space evokes beach shacks of days gone by, and makes for a lovely spot to watch the Fitzroy St circus in full swing. Tapas here is not aiming for Iberian authenticity, just good-tasting accompaniments to the extensive drinks menu.

**BAKER D CHIRICO**

Map pp88-9

Bakery, Café \$

☎ 9534 3777; 149 Fitzroy St, St Kilda; light meals \$5-9; ☎ breakfast &amp; lunch Tue-Sun; ☎ 16, 96, 112

The Baker's sourdough is some of the city's finest. Stock up on house-baked granola, or stop for a coffee, rhubarb danish or a *calzone*. Beautifully designed packaging (look for the boxed nougat) spreads the good taste around, and their footpath seating is some of the neighbourhood's most popular.

**CACAO** Map pp88-9

Bakery, Café \$

☎ 8598 9555; [www.cacao.com.au](http://www.cacao.com.au); 52 Fitzroy St, St Kilda; light meals \$4.50-11; ☎ 7am-7pm; ☎ 16, 96, 112

Set among the trees, Cacao creates award-winning chocolates with the best *couverture*. They also do a full French patisserie range, with all the standards you'd expect.

**LENTIL AS ANYTHING**

Map pp88-9

Vegetarian \$

☎ 9534 5833; [www.lentilasanything.com](http://www.lentilasanything.com); 41 Blessington St, St Kilda; prices at customers' discretion; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 16, 96

Choosing from the always-organic, no-meat menu is easy. Deciding what to pay can be

hard. This unique not-for-profit operation provides training and educational opportunities for marginalised people, as well as tasty, if not particularly notable, vegetarian food for everyone else. Whatever you do end up paying for your meal goes to a range of services that help new migrants, refugees, people with disabilities and the long-term unemployed. They also have a branch at the **Abbotsford Convent** (Map pp74-5; ☎ 9534 5833; 1 St Heliers St, Abbotsford).

**SOUTH YARRA, PRAHRAN & WINDSOR**

It's perpetual peak hour at Chapel St's many cafés. You'll also find a few excellent dining options in Prahran, including on Greville St. The southern Windsor strip just keeps getting hotter, with a great new clutch of recent openings.

**JACQUES REYMOND**

Map pp84-5

Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 9525 2178; [www.jacquesreymond.com.au](http://www.jacquesreymond.com.au); 78 Williams Rd, Prahran; degustation menu from \$98; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat; ☎ 6

Housed in a Victorian terrace of ample proportions, Reymond was a local pioneer of degustation dining and still encourages you to eat this way (there's a much-lauded vegetarian version). Expect a French-influenced, Asian-accented menu with lovely details including house-churned butter. Mod Oz at its best; fine dining at its most calm and grown up.

**BOTANICAL** Map pp84-5

Modern Australian \$\$\$

☎ 9820 7888; [www.thebotanical.com.au](http://www.thebotanical.com.au); 169 Domain Rd, South Yarra; mains around \$40; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ 3, 5, 6, 8, 55, 112

With its languid location opposite the Botanic Gardens, a bold menu and seductive décor, this is one of Melbourne's favourite fine-dining options. Prime produce is partnered cleverly with an emphasis on Mediterranean flavours. There's impeccable service and a serious wine list, of course. Bookings advised.

**DA NOI** Map pp84-5

Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9866 5975; 95 Toorak Rd, South Yarra; mains \$25-32; ☎ lunch Fri-Sun, dinner daily; ☎ 8

Da Noi serves beautiful Sardinian dishes chosen for the season. The spontaneous

kitchen might reinterpret the chef's special three times a night. Just go with it; it's a unique experience and harks back to a different way of dining. The five-course chef's selection is worth making room for. Bookings advised.

### MAMA GANOUSH

Map pp84–5 Modern Middle Eastern \$\$

☎ 9521 4141; [www.mamaganoush.com](http://www.mamaganoush.com); mains around \$25; 56 Chapel St, Windsor; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ Windsor

This is Middle Eastern food that remains true to its roots while being modern and new. The space is full of delicate arabesque screens; the kibbes, tagines and puddings are full of thought, passion and flavour. It's run by the brother of renowned chef and writer Greg Malouf, Geoff, and he also knows a thing or two about Levantine flavours.

### DINO'S DELI

Map pp84–5 Modern Mediterranean \$\$

☎ 9521 3466; 34 Chapel St, Windsor; mains \$22-32; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ Windsor  
At the time of writing, the deli half of Dino's was yet to open, but the clubby café-bistro is in full swing. The Pan-Med menu is especially strong on Spanish flavours and the space beguilingly eclectic. And it's busy, busy, busy.

### BORSCH, VODKA & TEARS

Map pp84–5 Polish \$\$

☎ 9530 2694; [www.borschvodkaandtears.com](http://www.borschvodkaandtears.com); mains \$19-25; 173 Chapel St, Windsor; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ Prahran, ☎ 6  
We'd consider this one for the name alone, but it's also the business for spruced-up Polish food and an impressive variety of everyone's favourite white spirit, vodka. *Przekazki* spreads let you sample; the dumplings, herrings and blintzes are top-notch, and the borsch is suitably authentic. There are more vegetarian options on the menu than you'd expect too.

ORANGE Map pp84–5 Café/Bar \$\$

☎ 9529 1644; 126 Chapel St, Windsor; mains \$16-26; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Wed-Sun; ☎ Windsor

Orange straddles the café-bar label with ease, its well-worn vinyl banquettes cushioning fashionable backsides for early breakfasts (from 7am) and late-night

beverages (open until 2am Thursday to Sunday). Serving good coffee during the day, Orange slows its grinders at night, replaces teaspoons with bar coasters, and chooses 'teaspoon' Jay Hawkins over Nina Simone LPs.

HOOKED Map pp84–5 Fish & Chips \$

☎ 9529 1075; [www.hooked.net.au](http://www.hooked.net.au); 172 Chapel St, Windsor; mains \$9-15; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ Prahran, ☎ 72

Great fish and chipperly with décor that will make you change your mind on the takeaway and eat in at the communal table. Old-school chips are made on site and fish is either done traditionally or with light Asian accents.

THAI FOOD TO GO Map pp84–5 Thai \$

☎ 9510 2112; 141 Chapel St, Windsor; mains \$8-18; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ Windsor

The happy hipster nonchalance of the staff and décor, plus a nicely buzzing local crew of diners, make up for fairly standard, if fresh and tasty, Thai food. The menu is also fabulously flexible and the salads are a steal. Plus they deliver.

CAFÉ VELOCE Map pp84–5 Italian \$

☎ 8080 9995; 9-11 Claremont St, South Yarra; dishes \$8-15; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☎ South Yarra, ☎ 8

Tucked at the back of Dutton's, this Fender Katsalidis shrine to auto design (and car lust in general) turns out perfect house-baked *pasticcera*, eggs and interesting breakfast dishes like baked ricotta served with fresh berries. Lunches (reminiscent of classic Café e Cucina fare) are more than good enough to assuage the sight of baby boomers getting gooey over classic Porsches.

### ORIENTAL TEA HOUSE

Map pp84–5 Chinese/Yum Cha \$\$

☎ 9824 0128; [www.orientalteahouse.com.au](http://www.orientalteahouse.com.au); 455 Chapel St, South Yarra; mains \$5-17; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ Prahran, ☎ 72

They've ditched the trolley ritual, but David Zhou's intriguing Shanghaiese offerings are just as good à la carte as off the cart. (And they still do the kid-pleasing lurid jellies for dessert.) The bright refit of an old pub is a departure from the norm too. The excellent teashop is worth a concerted postprandial browse.

KANTEEN Map pp84–5 Café/Bar \$

☎ 9827 0488; 150 Alexandra Ave, South Yarra; mains \$5-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch

This rare alfresco riverside café morphed from an old ablutions block into a firm neighbourhood favourite (it's also handy for Herring Island). It supplements its toasted pide selection with interesting breakfast options such as sticky rice with coconut, and lunch specials such as a Japanese-inspired noodle and duck salad. Fab as the location is, the service can be off-puttingly slow; loud commercial chill-out tunes don't make the wait any easier.

BASQUE Map pp84–5 Spanish \$

☎ 9533 7044; 159 Chapel St, Windsor; tapas \$3-11; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎ Windsor

Locals come en masse to sit and slurp, nibble and chat in this cute corner joint. The tapas is straightforward, authentic and made with love, with a drinks list to match.

## SOUTH MELBOURNE, PORT MELBOURNE & ALBERT PARK

These neighbourhoods are perfect for casual footpath dining on a sunny weekend and offer some solidly epicurean options too. While the superscaled restaurants along the bay have stunning views, some also have fairly nondescript food.

TEMPURA HAJIME Map pp92–3 Japanese \$\$\$

☎ 9696 0051; 60 Park St, South Melbourne; set meal \$72; ☎ 112

Completely unmarked door, tiny and almost impossible to get a booking? Check. Cult status is assured, and in this case, warranted. Hajime takes you on an edible journey with a set menu of beautifully pondered on and prepared small dishes made with seasonal produce.

L'OUSTAL Map pp92–3 French \$\$

☎ 9699 8969; [www.montaguehotel.com.au](http://www.montaguehotel.com.au); 166 Bridport St, Albert Park; mains \$30-35; ☎ lunch Wed-Sat, dinner Tue-Sat; ☎ 96

No cookie-cutter Francophilia here. This cute neighbourhood bistro is breezy and informal (more Carla Bruni than Edith Piaf) and does French standards with good pro-

duce and the odd contemporary twist. The winter menu is when the chef really comes into their own.

### MONTAGUE HOTEL

Map pp92–3 French, Modern Australian \$\$

☎ 9690 9044; [www.montaguehotel.com.au](http://www.montaguehotel.com.au); 355 Park St, South Melbourne; mains around \$28;

☎ lunch Thu-Fri, dinner Wed-Sun; ☎ 96  
No architect's wit at work here, just a smart, comfortable and essentially old-fashioned space. The mainly French food, with some Northern Asian ideas as well, is cooked with precision and care; it's definitely not just an adjunct to a bottle or two.

MISUZU Map pp92–3 Japanese \$\$

☎ 9699 9022; 3-7 Victoria Ave, Albert Park; mains \$13-33; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 1

The ground floor is a popular café, with a more formal restaurant upstairs. Misuzu's menu includes whopping noodle, rice and curry dishes, tempuras and takeaway options from the neatly displayed sushi bar. Sit outside under lantern-hung trees, or inside surrounded by murals and dark wood. Pop next door to *Umami* for a drink and sample sake from a vast selection.

### ARMSTRONG STREET FOOD STORE

Map pp92–3 Café \$

☎ 9690 4784; 30 Armstrong St, Middle Park; mains from \$10; breakfast & lunch; ☎ 96, 112  
Take in the slower pace of Armstrong St from the outside tables at this local's favourite. Well-priced café mains are made with care, or pop in for some pastries to take to the beach. Staff are friendly too.

### REX HUNT'S D'LISH FISH

Map pp92–3 Fish & Chips \$

☎ 9646 0660; 105 Beach St, Port Melbourne; basic fish & chips \$9; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 109

The self-titled fish-and-chipper of the fish-kissing celebrity angler draws the crowds, selling two tonnes of chips on a summer Sunday. It might not be gourmet, but it's perfect for taking down to the beach or watching the Spirit of Tassie sail into the sunset.

ST ALI Map pp92–3 Café \$

[www.stali.com.au](http://www.stali.com.au); 12-18 Yarra Pl, South Melbourne; mains \$8-13; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☎ 112

This hide-away warehouse space is a lovely jumble of communal tables, nooks



## PORT VIEWS

Station Pier holds many memories for generations of Victorian immigrants and it's still a working passenger port today. There's a clutch of swish mega-restaurants on the pier itself – including [Waterfront, Campari](#) and [3 Station Pier](#) (see [Map pp92–3](#)) – serving up bay vistas and variable food to large numbers of visitors. The best view, however, definitely belongs to the diminutive [My Dog Café](#) ([Map pp92–3](#); [www.mydog.com.au](#); ☎ breakfast & lunch Wed–Sun), which has a human food menu as well as a selection of canine treats. And yes, pooches can, and do, eat from the table.

and balconies to accommodate any mood. The food is simple, fresh Modern Middle Eastern. Coffee is carefully sourced, roasted and bagged on site, and guaranteed to be good. It's particularly perfect to wash down the chocolate-swirled pound cake.

## MART 130 [Map pp92–3](#)

Café \$

☎ 9690 8831; 107a Canterbury Rd, Middle Park; dishes \$6–10; ☎ breakfast & lunch; 🕒 96  
Where the light-rail trams now run was once a fully fledged railway line with a string of Federation-style stations. Mart 130 has painted the walls and floors a smart black and white, and serves up corncakes, granola and eggs with decks overlooking the park. Weekend waits can be long.

## NOÏSETTE [Map pp92–3](#)

Café, Bakery \$

☎ 9646 9555; [www.noisette.com.au](#); 84 Bay St, Port Melbourne; breads & pastries from \$3; ☎ 6.30am–6pm; 🕒 109

Good bread gets Melburnians going and the fifth-generation French baker at work here turns out some excellent Gallic-style loaves. There's also a wide range of authentic pastries – come January they even do a *galette des rois* for Epiphany.

## WILLIAMSTOWN

Not somewhere you'd go just to eat, but there's hordes of fish-and-chip shops, produce stores and pubs that cater to the day trippers (plus a few cafés that locals don't let on about).

## BREIZOZ [Map p96](#)

Creperie

☎ 9397 2300; [www.breizoz.com.au](#); cnr. 139 Nelson Pde; crepes \$6–12 ☎ breakfast Sun, lunch Wed–Sub, dinner Tue–Sun; 🕒 Williamstown

An authentic, if idiosyncratic, charmer with buckwheat crepes and cloudy farm-fresh Breton cider. There's no concession to bistro tastes; it is what it is, and that's a creperie. Fillings include *boudin blanc*, ratatouille, onion *soubise* (a jammy jumble of onion) or 'the brick', which piles on egg, ham, cheese, mushrooms and tomato. On Sundays, brioche and croissants are baked and Francophiles take their coffee in a bowl. The house meringues, jam and ice cream can, and should, be taken home. Also in [Fitzroy](#) ([Map pp74–5](#); ☎ 9415 7588; cnr Gertrude & Brunswick Sts).

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