



THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN

Travel + LUXURY

DECEMBER 11-12, 2021

MADE TO ORDER

LIFTING THE LID ON
AUSTRALIA'S HOTEL
DINING SCENE

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■ A big bula welcome back to Fiji

■ Equine elegance in the Scenic Rim

■ Regional art deco gems

Roundhouse, Crystalbrook Kingsley, Newcastle, NSW

This fine diner, named for the striking 1970s circular building it inhabits, crowns the top floor of the former Steel City's first five-star hotel. The open kitchen has plenty of action on show but more enticing are the views over the city towards the harbour and the long sandy stretch of Stockton Beach. Executive chef Natalie Bolt has taken the Crystalbrook "responsible luxury" approach and run with it. She sources many ingredients from within three hours of Newcastle, and is not afraid to transform "ugly" vegetables rejected by retailers into, say, a sophisticated amuse bouche. Wet and dry-aged beef comes from the hotel group's Queensland cattle property, kingfish and tuna are caught up the road at Nelson Bay while the wine list draws heavily on the Hunter Valley.

Must try Wallis Lake blue swimmer crab with compressed cucumber, watermelon rind and desert lime pickle, and the theatrical Wood-fire cocktail at the adjacent Romberg's bar.

crystalbrookcollection.com

PENNY HUNTER

The Terrace, Emporium Hotel South Bank, Brisbane

All-day dining and a cocktail list as long as a Queensland summer. It's all light, bright, white and breezy at this award-winning bar and diner on the 20th floor of one of Brisbane's snazziest properties. On sunny days, cue the retractable ceiling and all year round take in views across the Brisbane River to the city's soaring skyline. The two-course Terrace Lunch (weekdays; \$40) is light and Asian-influenced, featuring the likes of Hiramasa kingfish sashimi and coconut poached chicken salad. Or check the Snack+Graze options, including a knockout Moreton Bay bug roll pepped up with dashi mayonnaise, caviar and baby gem lettuce. More serious meal options include abundant seafood platters to share and there's a dizzying array of beverage options. Feeling festive? Go for the theatrical South Side Smoke Bomb, party-pink Watermelon Cooler or a Berry Christmas mix of infused gin, strawberry gum leaf syrup and lemon myrtle soda.

Must try Matcha green tea panna cotta with white peach and toasted sesame crunch.

emporiumhotels.com.au

SUSAN KUROSAWA

Koomo, Crowne Plaza Adelaide

Level 10 at Crowne Plaza Adelaide has become a favourite after-five haunt since debuting a year ago. Perhaps that's because it's the complete millennial-friendly package. A cool live/work lounge is bookended by a sun-drenched pool deck and lively restaurant dishing up Japanese fusion fare and some of the best views in the city. Koomo's light-filled interiors clearly reference Japan with lots of timber, earthenware plates and natural linen napkins but the food is more freewheeling. Chef Patrick Chung calls on his multicultural Fijian upbringing to incorporate Korean, Chinese and Indian influences in ever-changing menus. The mood is relaxed and convivial as pans rattle in the open kitchen, Japanese whisky is dispatched from the central bar and groups of colleagues who've closed their laptops, just for a moment, tuck



Clockwise from main: Koomo, Crowne Plaza Adelaide; Wildflower at COMO The Treasury, Perth; Merrymaker at Hotel Indigo Adelaide Markets; Roundhouse, Cr

ALL IN GOOD THINGS

Local hotels and lodges to dine for

into chicken katsu sandos and lobster rolls out on the terrace.

Must try Wagyu striploin with confit baby king oyster mushroom and truffle garlic butter.

koomo.com.au

CHRISTINE McCABE

Monster Kitchen and Bar, Ovolo Nishi, Canberra

The space can feel dauntingly large, with the salon, bar, lounge and private mosaic room swamping the ground floor of this designer-chic hotel. But settle in one of the four flamboyant spaces, made up of mostly reclaimed materials, at this temple to plant-based dining and let British-born, Michelin-trained chef Matthew Bentley gently walk your palate through the carefully assembled courses on the feasting menu, the only 100 per cent "vegetarian refined dining experience" in the nation's capital. This latest

dining offering from Ovolo reflects the accommodation brand's "conscious consumption" ethos with every cutting-edge veg chosen with responsibility, regionality and seasonality in mind. Linger a bit longer over cocktails in the stylish public lounge, which is popular with politicians, who use it like their living room.

Must try The signature dish of butternut squash katsu nugget on black rice.

monsterkitchen.com.au

CARLA GROSSETTI

Lollo, W Melbourne

Having conquered the northern reaches of the Flinders Lane gastro-precinct with his landmark eateries Coda and Tonka, Adam D'Sylva has staked a claim to the strip's southern end with Lollo at the Marriott group's W Melbourne, which opened in February. The 100-seat diner has a classic brasserie feel with lamplit leather booths, long bar and open kitchen. Lollo's menu taps into his Italian and Indian heritage, evidenced in a baked-to-order duck lasagne and a truffled buffalo mozzarella cased in pastry. Breakfast indulgences? There's a soufflé galette with smoked trout, poached egg and green peas or an indulgent Lollo Monsieur layered with grouyere and gypsy ham. Drinks-wise, the hotel's cellar contains 300 wines and 50 beers and typically creative W cocktails such as Karen, an absinthe-spiked Aperol spritz, and a house Negroni flavoured with native quandong and riberry.

Must try D'Sylva's trademark duck curry.

lollomelbourne.com

KENDALL HILL

Oncore by Clare Smyth, Crown Sydney

Lace-patterned curtains. Roses and cow parsley arranged on tables. The soundtrack of Dirty Dancing and ABBA over the speakers. It's hardly the glamour you'd expect on the 26th floor of Sydney's most opulent hotel but

you're in the world of Clare Smyth, who holds three Michelin stars at her London restaurant, Core, and who catered Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding. At this Sydney outpost, opened last month, she transports diners to the comfort of childhood. Each dish is adapted from the original Core classics and feel fresh from a fairytale: Lamb Carrot is Peter Rabbit-playful, and a Pear and Lemon Balm dessert is as gently complex as it is nostalgic. I leave feeling like I've been wrapped in the kindest and safest of hugs.

Must try Included on the seven-course tasting menu, Core Apple is an irresistible glossy sphere filled with apple brandy mousse.

crownsydney.com.au

ALEXANDRA CARLTON

Wildflower, COMO The Treasury, Perth

Born in inland WA, head chef Matthew Sartori experiments with flavours of the Aussie bush at a glass-enclosed rooftop dining space overlooking the Swan River. Renowned for its degustation that changes according to the six seasons of the Indigenous Noongar calendar, award-winning Wildflower is celebrating up to Christmas with a three-course Festive Flow lunch (Wednesday to Friday; \$89) for choices such as local lamb with eucalyptus, cured fish enlivened by finger lime and crisped ginger, Busseton octopus with rivermint salsa verde, or jarrah-roasted golden beetroot. All meals are accompanied by fennel and wattleseed bread, salad and dessert. From January, new dishes join the menu and the price reverts to \$56 for two courses.

Must try West Australian marron (freshwater crayfish) roasted and served with lightly pickled kohlrabi.

wildflowerperth.com.au

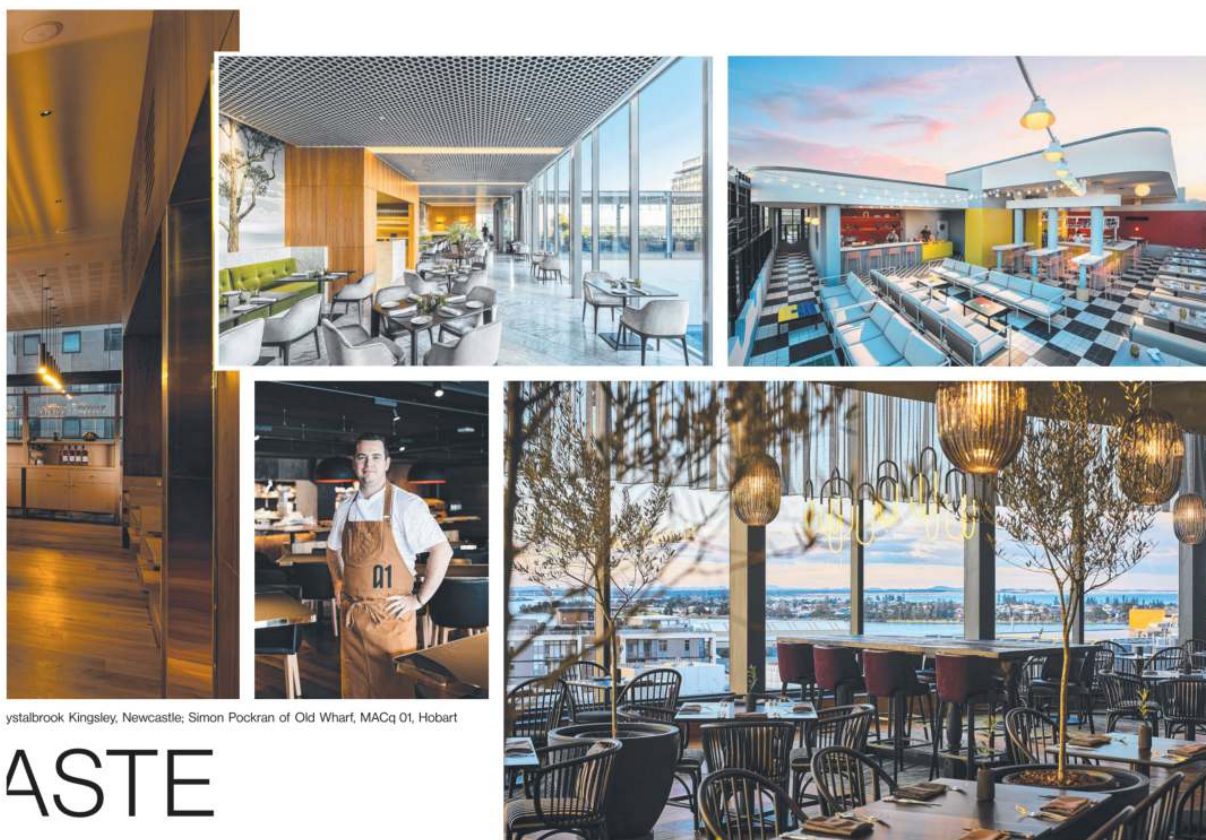
LOUISE GOLDSBURY

Emirates One&Only Woigan Valley, NSW

Fans of this Blue Mountains retreat are already familiar with the country-luxe vibe of



Monster Kitchen and Bar at Ovolo Nishi, Canberra, above, and its butternut squash katsu, right



ystalbrook Kingsley, Newcastle; Simon Pockran of Old Wharf, MACq 01, Hobart

ASTE

its airy main restaurant, serving up valley views with wombats and wallaroos likely grazing in the foreground. The latest development is the resort's exciting collaboration with Sydney's Bentley Group (Bentley, Monopole, Yellow, Cirrus and Ria), which sees acclaimed chef Brent Savage appointed creative director of food and sommelier Nick Hildebrandt supervising the beverage side of things. Wolgan by Bentley's menu celebrates Australian flavours with the likes of Maremma quail, Robbins Island beef and Spencer Gulf kingfish. And because good things come in small packages, don't bypass the canapes. Try the potato damper morsels with Wagyu rump and horseradish or goat's curd with smoked tomato broth. This is not the dynamic duo's first association with One&Only; they launched Botanica restaurant at One&Only Reethi Rah in The Maldives in January 2020.

Must try White chocolate cream and peach granita.

oneandonlyresorts.com
PENNY HUNTER

Merrymaker, Hotel Indigo Adelaide Markets

The name says it all – make merry and kick back at this level 16 rooftop bar and bistro atop one of the SA capital's newest boutique hotels. Mixes such as a wattleseed negroni are seemingly colour-matched to a slow sunset over the Adelaide Hills; the black and white patterned floor, casual seating and festoon lighting create a casual but chic vibe. A "raw bar" selection of seafood comprises a generous range of state fish and crustaceans, from buns stuffed with Spencer Gulf prawns, and plump oysters spritzed with finger limes, to calamari seasoned

The mood is relaxed and convivial as pans rattle in the open kitchen, and Japanese whisky is dispatched from the central bar



with sea salt and mountain pepper. Market providers from across the way supply ingredients such as smallgoods and cheese for ploughman's platters and charcuterie plates and many food collaborators are listed on the menu, right down to butter from Dairyman Farm in the Barossa and regional gin distillers. This is not a fine dining experience but creative, fun, hyper-local and super-friendly.

Must try Rhubarb and summer berry Eton mess.

adelaide.hotelindigo.com
SUSAN KUROSAWA

Old Wharf Restaurant, MACq 01, Hobart

Expect next-level chat from the waiters at Old Wharf at MACq 01, which is billed as a "storytelling hotel". The restaurant is on Muwinina country on Hobart's waterfront where Europeans first set foot and its name nods to the port's maritime and trading heyday.

In sunny weather, the best seats in the house are on the deck, while the interiors are a throwback to the building's history with heavy wooden beams, and walls made of mooring rope, and handcrafted furniture. Diners are firmly tethered here to the most "today in Tassie" food offerings imaginable, encompassing a journey of time-honoured traditional and regional Tasmanian cooking by executive chef Simon Pockran (ex-Saffire Freycinet). The menu also pays tribute to local growers, wine-makers and producers whose stories are told on columns placed around the elegant dining space.

Must try The Tassie scallop pie.
oldwharfrestaurant.com.au
CARLA GROSSETTI

MORE TO THE STORY

The names on everyone's lips

Samuels on Mill, Parmelia Hilton, Perth This long-established hotel has recently emerged from a 10-month makeover. Street-level Samuels on Mill bar and brasserie has been overhauled, from menus to design details in muted copper tones. Chef Chad Miskiewicz is at the helm, championing the "our state on a plate" ethos of local ingredients and producers. Linguine tossed with chilli and crab is the star turn.

Hellenika, The Cairle, Brisbane Go the full Greek in this big, airy restaurant where the menu brims with seafood options, chargrilled lamb ribs and the likes of spanakopita, moussaka, veal and rice dolmades wrapped in silverbeet, and avgolemono chicken soup just like yia-yia used to make. Drinks? Sip on an Ari Onassis gin-based cocktail with elderflower and lemon.

Automata, The Old Clare, Sydney Clayton Wells's Chippendale diner serves degustation meals of three, five or seven courses of intensely flavoured and daintily presented dishes sourced via an impeccable produce chain and served in a pared-back, retro warehouse-style space. It's a fine dining experience but leave room for desserts of the ilk of yoghurt sorbet, soft meringue, shiso, rosemary oil, bergamot and blood orange.

Lona Misa, Ovolo South Yarra, Melbourne In tune with the Ovolo group's plant-based focus, chefs Ian Curley and Shannon Martinez oversee a menu badged with the motto of "a rebellious renaissance from root to stem". Vegetables are fire-roasted on a Josper grill and the tasting menu reveals strong South American influences. Drinks come with a "garden to glass" twist, such as a Hemingway daiquiri prettied up with pink grapefruit.

Peppina, The Tasman, Hobart This diner at the new Marriott in a heritage conversion on Salamanca Place opens next weekend but the buzz has been building for months. Culinary director Massimo Mele's Italian background informs the cuisine coupled with a strong nod to the island state's produce and culinary heritage. Head chef Glenn Byrnes presides over the 190-seater in an internal courtyard with wood-fired oven and open firepit. The hotel's Mary Mary cocktail bar and "spirits library" is already in action.

SUSAN KUROSAWA