

EXPLORE

Uncommon



Foodies Guide To Melbourne

Crisscross from one side of Melbourne to the other and you'll find a vibrant city of competing dining personalities as interchangeable as Melbourne's weather, as **Gillian Saxon** explains.

In a city where searching for that secret restaurant, illusive laneway bar or new coffee hole-in-the-wall is a local sport, Melbourne comes through with the goods whether you are looking to impress that important client, want to drink the best coffee in town or simply find somewhere understated but fabulous to wind down after hours. Explore, refresh and let us help you choose your own adventure with our foodie's guide to Melbourne.

Melbourne CBD

The Melbourne CBD has something for everyone from world-class shopping, eating and entertainment precincts to art galleries and universities, as well as vibrant open spaces, international sporting events, a thriving laneway culture and the picturesque Yarra River.

Get your first caffeine hit of the day from Melbourne's most compact hole-in-wall espresso bar, **Tom Thumb** (53 Flinders Ln). Choose between the robust house blend and rotating single origin then grab something sweet on your way out. Head towards Bourke Street and take a left down the laneway beside Pellegrini's,

Melbourne's very first espresso bar. Here, Italy quickly gives way to Chinatown on Little Bourke Street where high-end Asian eateries sit comfortably beside no-frills dumpling houses, Chinese medicine shops, and kitsch souvenir outlets.

Nearby at **Ezard**, (187 Flinders Ln) an impeccable three-course express lunch service is perfect for that important client meeting. Ezard's take on modern Australian dishes with Asian riffs push the envelope with unusual textures and flavour profiles that just simply work. Try the insanely fresh cured swordfish, pickled cucumber, wasabi, soy and ginger or the western plains pork belly, cherry and mustard glaze.

If you missed out on a golden ticket to Heston Blumenthal's Fat Duck pop up, wait no more. **Dinner by Heston** (8 Whiteman St) at Crown Casino is now taking reservations and serving its gastronomic defying creations to all Melbourne diners. Across the river, at the western end of Collins Street, take the lift to the 55th floor of the Rialto building to the opulent Lui Bar (525 Collins St) for arguably Melbourne's most spectacular view with equally impressive drinks to match.

North

Once the gritty, industrial backbone of Melbourne, Fitzroy, Collingwood, and Abbotsford have transformed into the city's trendy inner north enclave with Brunswick and Smith streets at the epicentre. Benefiting from a legacy of disused warehouses, factories, and former religious premises, these spaces have been given new life as alternative chichi bars, gastro pubs and local design stores framed by explosions of street art and converted apartments.

Kitty Burns (24 Acacia Pl, Abbotsford), Melbourne's current darling of Instagram, is a light and bright all-day eatery great for a pre-work coffee or something more substantial. The menu is considered but playful including a revamped chicky-roll (filo wrapped confit chicken with chicken mousse) or Kitty's Eton Mess with coconut yoghurt, spice meringue, and seasonal fruit.

Further north is Carlton, known for its wide streets, beautiful Victorian homes and European-style green squares. Here, Lygon Street is the vibrant centre of the Italian precinct where you'll find bustling delicatessens full of cheese and cured meats, wine bars, artisanal gelato shops with cult status and some of the best pizza in the country.

Carlton may be the beating heart of Little Italy, but that doesn't mean you have to miss out if you're not a coffee drinker. Tea lovers can rejoice at the **Porcelain Tea Parlour** (149 Elgin St, Carlton) with its rotating menu of fruits and florals plus a few surprises from the far corners of the globe. Open late especially for those who like to drink their tea slow, from fine china cups. If you're looking for something a bit stronger, up the road you'll find the quirky local neighbourhood institution **Gerald's Wine Bar** (386 Rathdowne St, Carlton). An excellent selection of fine French wines awaits alongside classic cocktails that pair well with the European bistro-style seasonal menu.

At Transformer (99 Rose St, Fitzroy), chef Luke Florence's deconstructed and highly experimental plant-based menu offers diners a fresh take on the humble vegetable drawing on Middle Eastern, Mediterranean and Asian influences, with a herbaceous, fragrant drinks list to match.

South / South-East

Melbourne's south side is an eclectic mix of the intelligent eateries, grungy-chic bars and gourmet markets of Windsor and Prahran that are complemented by the swoon-worthy cafes and high-end retail shopping in South Yarra and South Melbourne.

Uncommon (60 Chapel St, Windsor), a café located in a former curiosity shop of found objects is enticing a new kind of clientele with some of Melbourne's best coffee and its organic and sustainable food ethic. Try the morning super salad with coconut, quinoa, kale, and spirulina or the wagyu beef short rib with a freshly made pressed juice or smoothie. ▶



Lui Bar



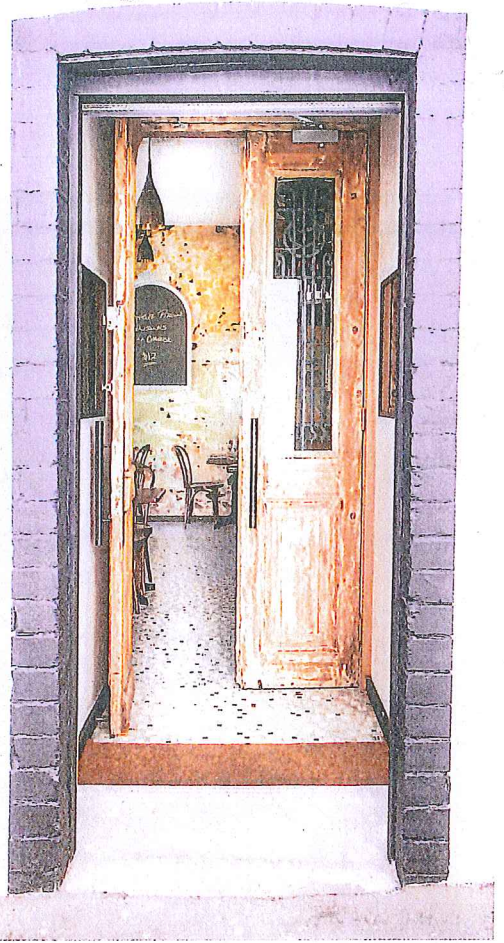
Kitty Burns



Ezard



SAINT URBAN



Just a short drive across the river to Victoria Street, Richmond, you'll find yourself in the heart of Melbourne's thriving Vietnamese community where fragrant scents waft from Asian grocers and pho shops, and bustling kitchenware outlets hum with foot traffic and colour.

Further south, **The Kettle Black** (50 Albert Rd, South Melbourne) is more of a restaurant destination than a café with its pared-back light and bright Nordic design. The breakfast menu is ambitious with the likes of Ocean Trout Tataki and scrambled eggs with cured Flinders Island wallaby sitting alongside crowd pleasers like ricotta hotcakes, but the vibe is laidback, and the service is friendly.

Bibelot (285-287 Coventry St, South Melbourne) is an artisanal patisserie, chocolate shop, coffee bar, gelateria and high-tea salon that wouldn't be out of place along the boulevards of Paris. Rows of petite gateaux, macarons and biscuits are lined up with military precision underneath a glass casing. Just try not to be distracted by the chocolate tap over in the gelateria that runs with liquid cacao gold all day long.

Chef Shaun Quade follows in the footsteps of Heston at **Lûmé** (226 Coventry St, South Melbourne) then takes it up a notch offering diners an eighteen-course blind-tasting sensory degustation of seasonal ingredients. If you're not ready to hand over the reins, an a la carte menu is also

available for more conservative diners. Our advice? Live a little!

At his Japanese fine dining Omakase restaurant, **Minamishima** (4 Lord St, Richmond), chef Koichi Minamishima wields a sashimi knife with the steady, assured hand and skills of a master, telling of his twenty-five years' experience. There is no menu, but the chef's selection showcases the best local, seasonal produce as well as that of Tokyo's Tsukiji Fish Market.

Named after Saint Urban, a 4th-century French bishop who was the patron saint of wine, **Saint Urban** (213 Swan St, Richmond) wine bar and bistro is perfect for a nightcap and a late night snack. Cosy up by the beautiful arch windows for a coffee break or glass of wine in this new neighbourhood favourite.

Bayside

St Kilda, Melbourne's iconic summertime playground - where locals flock for their sundowners, markets and wine bar hopping along Acland and Fitzroy streets, slows down a little for the cooler months. When the action moves indoors, experience another side of this seaside suburb through its superb one-hatted restaurants, cutting-edge cafes and boutique bars.

Chef Koichi Minamishima wields a sashimi knife with the steady, assured hand and skills of a master, telling of his twenty-five years' experience.



Start your day with a clean, green conscience at St Kilda's hottest kid on the café block, **Matcha Mylkbar** (72 Acland St, St Kilda). Come for the vegan eggs, with yolks created from sweet potato, coconut milk and linseed protein and egg whites made out of agar flavoured with coconut and almond milk. Also, try the house-special matcha or mushroom lattes.

At **Café Di Stasio** (31 Fitzroy St), a quarter-century veteran of the St Kilda restaurant scene, white-jacketed waiters glide effortlessly between tables to serve you the traditional Italian rustic specials of the day. Perhaps Melbourne's best value two-course lunch that is complemented by a glass of wine.

Back on Acland Street, head down an old arcade and open the side door to the **Ciccolina back bar** (130 Acland St), one of St Kilda's most intimate bars, for a nightcap and late night bar snacks. Try their signature Espresso Martini and get comfortable in leather-lined booths.

East

Leafy Hawthorn in Melbourne's east is one of the city's most picturesque suburbs with beautifully preserved Victorian and Edwardian homes, a vibrant student community and a great selection of cafes, shopping, and open green spaces.

Come to **BAWA** (248 Burwood Rd, Hawthorn) for your



usual flat white or be adventurous. Try the Black Tonic, a shot of espresso with a dash of tonic and fresh lime, iced coffee or organic Kombucha to kick-start your day—you won't be sorry. At the other end of the day, slip into the **Kilburn Whisky and Cocktail Bar** (348 Burwood Rd, Hawthorn), a grand former commercial bank built in the 1880s, named after its architect. For whisky aficionados, there are over 600 whiskies to choose from as well a menu of craft beers that are rotated on a monthly basis.

Melbourne offers a plethora of establishments for the passionate foodie. So next time you visit Melbourne, be sure to venture out and explore with your tastebuds. ■

Quest Apartment Hotels have 43 properties around the greater Melbourne area. See the Accommodation Directory on page 60 for the full list.