

adelaidegrapevine

NIGEL HOPKINS

THEY may be the driving force behind Adelaide's small bar revolution, but it's still rare to find a "sommelier-led" restaurant, but that's how it is at McLaren Flat's **The Currant Shed** where former Orana and Magill Estate sommelier Josh Picken has taken charge. The Currant Shed is also a story of how a comfortable but not very distinguished joint in a regional backwater can evolve into a contemporary, stylish restaurant that more than justifies a 40-minute drive from the city. Just as significantly a new head chef, **Dioni Flanagan**, joined the team. Her cooking is now so well crafted you have to ask where has she been all these years, so low has she flown under the radar.

The Currant Shed melds almost invisibly into its landscape, a low-slung building in the lee of a hill, shiraz vineyard to one side, cab sav on the other. There are polished concrete floors, a salute to the '70s with its straw ceiling and ceiling fans, a wall of corrugated iron and a great sense of being close to the outdoors - lots of light and a plastic curtained side wall that overlooks an immaculately groomed orchard of lime trees.

Not surprisingly, lime juice crops up more than once on the menu - first in the complementary Coffin Bay oyster served with a smidge of tapioca and chilli, plus wafer-thin squid ink and smoked eel crisps. A second complementary taste arrives, curly sweet potato and rice crackers with fluffy, aerated and whipped Paris Creek blue cheese - a generous and tantalising start to the meal.

Entree dishes might include crumbed Port Lincoln sardines served with toasted pistachios and a smear of jammy cumquat emulsion, or slices of quickly seared kangaroo fillet, rolled in crushed native pepperberry and served on sauteed baby

spinach with hazelnuts and a mulberry reduction. Main courses follow the same exemplary path, with dishes such as Spencer Gulf sand whiting, panfried and served on a bed of warrigal greens and celeriac puree, while a cool-climate Adelaide Hills shiraz goes well with slow-braised lamb shoulder and slices of pan-seared lamb rump that comes with fresh peas and pea wafers on a light jus. The Currant Shed, 104 Ingoldby Rd, McLaren Flat. Open for lunch Thursday to Tuesday (closed Wednesday); phone (08) 8383 0232.

With more than 50 years of history behind it as the Chesser Cellars, this city centre rabbit warren of upstairs downstairs and precipitous staircases has been reborn in contemporary form as **The Henry Austin**.

Not a lot has changed from its heyday as the Cellars, other than a major clean-up, a coat of white paint, lots of artwork and an eclectic array of chairs and tables whimsically presided over by a very large stuffed brown bear.

The real change has been in the kitchen, presided over by former Bistro Dom chef **Shane Wilson**, who turns out delectable mod-Oz dishes in yum char style, no menu, trust the kitchen with its travelling trays of small to mid-size plates ranging from Smoky Bay oysters with blood orange to hot-smoked kingfish with whipped avocado, native currants and roasted macadamias, or smoked Coorong beef, pickled lettuce and fried coastal salt bush.

There's a terrific small list of wines by the glass but diners are welcome to explore the extensive cellar. With an often raging cocktail bar downstairs HA stays open late, and latecomers may find they're treated to one of HA's unique tiffin tins, a complete compact meal normally served for lunchtime takeaway but often kept on until the midnight hour. The

Henry Austin, 29-31 Chesser St, Adelaide. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner Monday-Saturday; phone (08) 8223 2998.

It's been a fast-moving six months since **Julie** and **Ed Peter** were handed the keys to the long vacant **Uraidla Hotel**, culminating in its re-opening in October. The Peters have already been responsible for a similar transformation of the Crafers Hotel, and their Uraidla pub seems set for similar stratospheric success.

The main bar features a new pressed tin ceiling and original light fittings made from old vegetable packing cases and ancient glass insulators sourced from an outback station, while an adjacent lounge has a windmill blade "chandelier" from the same station. Fat chesterfield sofas, comfy chairs, old carpets and open fires add homely touches, while the gents features urinals carved from spent stainless steel beer kegs.

Former Crafers Hotel head chef **Anna Kittel** is in charge of the kitchens, and while her menu is less extensive it still promises well-priced pub food that is both modern and top quality, including dishes such as rabbit, pancetta and ale pie or Moroccan spiced Suffolk lamb shoulder with baby carrots, currants and cous cous. A blackboard menu will have daily specials.

While the wine list, not surprisingly, is less extensive than the stellar version at Crafers, it makes a special feature of local Basket Range winemakers - something that will be reinforced in the next stage of development which, over the next year, will see the nearby former squash courts turned into a regional cellar door, brewery, bakery and cafe. Uraidla Hotel, 1198 Greenhill Rd, Uraidla. Open for lunch and dinner seven days; phone (08) 8390 0500.

Top: Uraidla interior view of the warm fireplace.
Left: Interior of the Currant Shed.

