




FOR all the excitement generated by the temporary relocation of Swedish restaurant Noma to Sydney recently, one can't help but suspect those eager Sydney punters would have been far better rewarded had they flown to Adelaide, dined at Jock Zonfrillo's **Orana**, upstairs at the eastern end of Rundle Street, stayed the night and flown home. With a menu costing about a third of Noma's, and no less exciting, they'd still have had a heap of change left over. Zonfrillo is far from being the first chef to be fascinated by the potential of using native produce. But in Australia no other chef has come close to understanding the nuances of flavour and texture, been able to create dishes of such exquisite balance and depth. The meal starts with around 15 tasting dishes, what Orana calls Alkoopina, or snacks, followed by four or five slightly larger dishes and a couple of desserts. There's a tiny loaf of damper, cooking and crisping on a bowl of hot coals, with lamb butter – like a thick hollandaise made from aged, roasted lamb fat. Then one of several tastes in a tiny wooden spoon, chicken liver parfait with shavings of wild Adelaide Hills hawthorn and a scattering of mountain pepper. Slender Moreton Bay fig shoots are cooked in blackwood ash water to draw out their bitterness before being brushed with pandanus fruit puree topped with dried crumbs of Moreton Bay fig leaves. There's a single mussel shell filled with a delicate mussel custard with a lightly cooked mussel on top and a sprig of sea blight; a small bowl of nutty-flavoured macadamia milk spiced with native thyme. Still in this list of "snacks" comes a sensational bowl of pippis cooked over eucalypt with smoky eucalypt leaves in a broth of their own juices and a little crème fraîche, with beach succulents such as samphire and sea celery. A dish like this in a top-starred Michelin restaurant would probably set you back \$100 on its own,

and be no better than this. Larger courses include a gorgeous-looking salad of pickled kohlrabi, shaped into little cones, come with stringent lillipilli, dorrigo pepper, sorrel leaves and a lemon myrtle dressing, and another with thinly-sliced strips of kangaroo loin, lightly seared over coals and arranged as a kangaroo footprint before being topped with a melange of fermented gubbinge (Kakadu plum) from the Kimberley and wild radish leaves. If you're lucky there might be magpie goose on the menu, a rare and much prized game bird – ruby red, barely seared, thinly sliced, on a bed of mashed, smoked potato with smoked leek and a slightly acidic, clear sauce from pandanus vinegar and bunya nut brine, with a scatter of red saltbush berries. Zonfrillo is in search of a really authentic Australian flavour, and at Orana he's found it. 285 Rundle Street, Adelaide. Phone (08) 8232 3444. Open for lunch Friday, dinner Tue – Sat.

German chef **Fabian Lehmann** had a pleasant surprise when he arrived in McLaren Vale three months ago to take over the kitchen at Maxwell Wines' **Ellen Street Restaurant**, part of the winery's splendid cellar door complex with panoramic views over McLaren Vale. Burrowed deep into the limestone of a surrounding hill was a tunnel filled with mushrooms, making Ellen Street quite possibly the only restaurant in Australia with its own dedicated mushroom farm. It had been something of a discovery for winery owner Mark Maxwell when he bought the vineyard in the 1980s. A little research revealed the 50m tunnel had been dug in 1916 in order to grow mushrooms, then abandoned and later used by Maxwell for subterranean dinners until he decided two years ago to restore it to its original use. Now there's a long elevated rack supporting sacks of different sorts of mushrooms – crunchy, fragrant portobellos, king brown mushrooms and logs of "substrate" on

which oyster and shiitake mushrooms perch. The logs are inoculated with the appropriate spores and held under water for two hours, simulating a heavy tropical rainstorm, and out pop the shiitakes. Within hours they've joined crisp skinned, twice cooked pork belly on a plate with baby carrots, carrot puree and mushroom dust, just one of the dishes on offer in either three or five course degustation menus paired with Maxell wines. Lehmann has very quickly shown he's a major addition to the already impressive culinary line-up of the region. Olivers Road, McLaren Vale. Phone (08) 8323 8200. Open for lunch Thurs-Mon.

**The Apothecary** has matured as South Australia's definitive wine bar, but it also continues to build its reputation as a restaurant, with a range of warmly furnished dining spaces from rustic, brick-lined cellar to snug mezzanine and intimate ground floor "drink dispensary". Over the past year chef Frank Hero has lifted what was already a very good dining experience to a new level with dishes such as seared scallops with smoked parsnip foam and beetroot crisps, lightly smoked eye fillet carpaccio with mustard-infused truffle oil, and a richly braised alpaca roulade with juniper berries and shimeji mushroom. Even more comforting is the exceptional wine list. It provides many tasting choices, ranging from 75ml tasting glasses that can be matched to each course, to 150ml, 250ml and 500ml formats, plus a range of half and full bottles from the extensive main list. 118 Hindley St, Adelaide. Phone (08) 8212 9099. Open for dinner daily. 



Top left: Pork belly from Ellen St Restaurant.  
Above: Snacks from Orana Restaurant.