



PUBS are getting hefty makeovers and Melbourne has its first restaurant with a use-by date, seriously... It's going to be an interesting summer with all the change.

The Star Hotel, the old-school South Melbourne pub on Clarendon St was taken on by the Reeb group - four business partners who specialise in building and interior styling - in March this year and the venue has been completely overhauled. Gone are the blacked-in windows, the low-ceilings have been removed to make way for a mezzanine level. Perhaps as a reaction to the unpredictable Melbourne weather, the interior has been dressed to resemble a beer garden with plants growing vertically, fake grass flooring and loads of natural light in the former live music den.

Spokesman and co-director of the **Reeb Group**, **Ben Addison**, says that while the pub can't be all things to all people, "there's a lot of choice in the venue." The ground floor dining room offers booth seating and table service while the adjacent public bar is more relaxed, with television screens and bench seating. Take the stairs to what Addison describes as, "more of a night club area," where they'll take advantage of the 3am licence. There's a DJ on weekends and access to an open roof-top

bar. The one menu, by chef **Danny Callen**, will be available throughout the venue. Callen has given a wink to good pub grub - a small section of the menu dedicated to dishes such as chicken parmigiana or a Black Angus burger - but his menu opens up to seasonal touches. Zucchini flowers filled with goat's cheese or house-made gnocchi with asparagus and broad beans sit alongside what's become standard drinking food like pulled pork sliders and fried chicken wings. The drinks list is "broad and we've been careful to keep the price point down," says Addison. The Star Hotel, open daily from midday, 160 Clarendon St, South Melbourne; phone (03) 9682 6288.

Lamaro's hotel that hit the ground running just on 10 years ago with chef **Michael Lambie** in the kitchen, fell into more of a jog for the last few years until the **Colonial Leisure Group** took over 12 months ago. The group, which own South Yarra's The Botanical, The Portsea Hotel and The Half Moon in Brighton, among others, have relaunched the venue as **Lamaro's Bodega**, a Spanish-influenced restaurant and bar embracing sustainable business practices. The menu has been built around produce from Cape Schanck Farm on the Mornington Peninsula and western Victoria's Greenvale Farm,

both part of the Colonial Leisure Group's portfolio. **Anthony Kumnick** of Greenvale Farm is working closely with the kitchen to highlight his ethically raised, rare-breed pork in dishes such as whole suckling pig and roasted pig's head with seasonal condiments. There are other flavours, too, perhaps soft, seared sweetbreads in butter and capers or grilled rockling with clams. The kitchen has been equipped with a Josper oven, an asado grill and a Closed Loop compost system, which will fertilise the vegetables from Cape Schanck Farm. The dining room, redesigned by CBD architects Techné, has lots of dark woods, rendered walls and moody lighting. There are two private dining rooms supporting the 50-seat dining room and bar area. **Marvin Holder**, who's just wrapped up five years at Vue de Monde, will manage front-of-house; his assistant manager is **Andrew Harvey**, fresh from another CLG post at the Robbie Burns, Collingwood. 273-279 Cecil St, South Melbourne; phone (03) 9690 3737.

There's a new South Yarra dining room by chef **Jason Jones** and his business partners **Anita Basile** and **Hugo Tremayne** and it's closing within 12 months! In a new concept to Melbourne, the trio has transformed B'Stilla on Bray St into **Enquire Within**, a restaurant with a fluid concept that will change its offering every 12 months. Surreal wallpaper - Albert Einstein with beer in his brain, Rita Hayworth thinking of clouds - adds a quirky touch, and board games (snakes and ladders, backgammon, draughts) set into the outdoor tables keep customers entertained. The menu, by chef **Florian Ribul**, continues the tongue-in-cheek theme but his experience at places like Fitzroy's Hammer & Tong allows skill and technique to come through. Appetisers include popcorn lamb brains with slaw while entrees of beef tartare with smoked egg yolk give way to mains of char-grilled prawns with broad beans and pork cheek with fennel. For dessert, it's hard not to consider the Chapel Street Sundae, with the option of fries on the side.

Basile says the idea of constant change is to maintain interest. "Why not always be the next new place to try?" They've even put a sign behind the bar stating "Closing Soon" to keep diners guessing. On Sundays they open only the bar area and serve a menu of shucked oysters and fries. 30b Bray St, South Yarra; phone (03) 9826 2370. 🍷

Above: The Star Hotel