



SUMMERTIME... and the restaurant's still open...It could be a new tune to express the growth and evolution of the Melbourne dining landscape over the last few months. We're eating authentic contemporary Vietnamese in the eastern suburbs, getting serious about slow-cooked meats in the south and the inner-north keeps doing its own thing, holding the interest of the rest of the city. Hawthorn, in Melbourne's inner-south-east, has a new Vietnamese eatery in **St Cloud**. The former furniture factory is an eye-catcher on a busy stretch of Burwood Rd, covered with hot pink street-art-inspired logos and characters splashed on a white background. In a collaboration of experience and energy, manager **Shaunn Anderson**, formerly of Richmond's Feast of Merit, head chef **Franky Pham**, also of Feast of Merit and **James Klapanis**, the owner of Quaff in Toorak, have joined forces. The focus is on fast, fresh and vibrant food, "the flavours of Vietnam," says Klapanis, who met Anderson and Pham as a customer at Feast of Merit and the trio planted the seeds of a creating a business together. The menu gives tradition a nudge, there's some of Pham's family's favourites - Vung Tau chicken with herbs and chilli or Banh Khot, turmeric and coconut pancakes with pork belly, shrimp and spring onion oil. It also tugs on heartstrings with perennial faves like caramel pork belly (to share) and spicy braised eggplant claypot. Family pleasers include rice paper rolls and Pho that feature on the lunch and dinner menus alongside an "I'm So Hungry" menu at \$55 per person for a minimum of two. Anderson's drinks menu takes in craft beers, including a St Cloud lager, cocktails - the Viet Express is a mix of house-spiced rum with tamarind syrup and drip coffee - and a succinct wine list. The old factory has been given a youthful makeover,

lightened and brightened over the two levels. There's lots of white tiles and dark wooden floorboards that support Viet-kitsch colourful artwork. Upstairs is another dining room - with the option of being a private dining room for up to 80 - that leads to an open terrace bordered with loads of greenery. St. Cloud is open for lunch and dinner from 11.30am Tuesday to Friday and for brunch, lunch and dinner from 10am on Saturday and Sunday. 644 Burwood Rd, Hawthorn East; phone (03) 9882 0146. www.stcloudeatinghouse.com.au.

Meatworks Co. opened in November to an enthusiastic audience happy to tuck into slow-cooked smokey meats, some seafood and vegetables. Owner **Lindsay Jones-Evans** drew on his industrial engineering degree to hand-build a 450kg wood smoker in the 100-seat South Melbourne restaurant.

If the name is familiar, Jones-Evans and his family built the Jones the Grocer empire and ran The Victoria Room, serving high tea and cocktails in Sydney for 10 years before it closed last May. He decided to return to his hometown of Melbourne and bought the former garage, turning it into a light-filled, open space with industrial touches; think concrete floors, exposed brickwork, worn woods and brassy lighting. At Meatworks, Jones-Evans has brought in chef **Travis Watson** to deliver a menu mostly about braising, roasting and smoking meats - lamb, pork, beef and chicken sourced from around Australia. Consider a platter of 10-hour smoked and pulled brisket, sticky lamb ribs, pulled pork, braised beef ribs, smoked Hassel Back potatoes, BBQ sauce and tomato relish. If you order this, make sure

you bring your friends! You'll also find burgers - perhaps a pork burger, filled with pulled pork, pickles, swiss cheese, chipotle mayonnaise, house slaw; or maybe a sticky beef shin, slowly braised and served with pak choy and vermicelli rice noodles in a spicy beef broth. There's seafood morsels, too, such as smoked salmon and pomegranate salad. 28-30 Ross St, South Melbourne; phone (03) 9041 5727.

Chef and restaurateur **Andrew McConnell** already has his thumb print firmly ingrained on Fitzroy in Melbourne's inner-north (not to mention much of the CBD and St Kilda). In Fitzroy, there's high-end, gorgeous dining at Cutler and Co., on Gertrude St, with The Builders Arms pub just a few blocks down the road. Around the corner from these favourites he's opened **MeatSmith** on the Fitzroy side of Smith St. MeatSmith is a specialist butcher and McConnell has gone into business with ex-Peter Bouchier butcher **Troy Wheeler**. Wholesale is a big part of the business, with the shop already supplying at least 10 restaurants around the city. It's also a commercial kitchen and a shop.

There are cuts of rare-breed pigs, lamb and beef, and they have prepared and pre-marinated some of the cuts to make getting it into the oven easier. There's also corned meats, salamis and potted foie gras. 273 Smith St, Fitzroy; phone (03) 9419 8558. www.meatSmith.com.au.

Above: Delicious food from St Cloud.
Below: Dining at St Cloud.

