



IT'S HARD to imagine a more idyllic summer setting for a restaurant than overlooking a large pond filled with ducks and other water birds, approached from an avenue of giant Moreton Bay figs, with spreading lawns and formal gardens in all directions. Adelaide's **Botanic Gardens Restaurant** is housed in century-old original tearooms, enabling the conservatory-style restaurant to take full advantage of its location with 270-degree views of the gardens. Changes took place when the restaurant was taken over by a local catering company, but all of them have been positive, with the restaurant now winning plaudits as one of the best in town – one of the consequences of the catering company leaving BG to function as a stand alone, independent restaurant far from the presumed catering mentality. Key to this has been the arrival of **Paul Baker** as head chef. While other chefs have to send out teams of foragers to source the produce they need, Baker has the resource of an enormous kitchen garden and myriad plant varieties within a short walk of his kitchen door. Food miles hardly exist for this kitchen. The Botanic Gardens kitchen harvest extends from baby celery and borage through chicory and cumquats, kale and liquorice root, to rainbow chard, saltbush, warrigal greens and wild garlic, all up around 60 varieties of edible plant to choose from. It would be easy for a chef to overplay such an abundant hand, but Baker has learnt restraint. Standout dishes include smoked tommy ruff escabeche with mussel custard and smoked mussels, slow-cooked Coorong Angus brisket with crisp-grilled

tendon, beetroot emulsion and caramelised garlic. With all that produce to play with he can be forgiven for more exotic dishes such as burnt myrtleberry meringue with heirloom beetroots, Jerusalem artichokes, cacao nibs and raspberry. Just don't look outside at the duck pond and its adorable inhabitants as you tuck into the cured duck ham with pressed confit duck leg or the chicken and duck ballotine. Baker assures us that the local ducks are off limits. The good wine list includes plenty of interesting and well-priced wines by the glass. Adelaide Botanic Gardens Restaurant, North Tce, Adelaide. Open for lunch Tuesday-Sunday, dinner Friday-Saturday; phone (08) 8223 3526.

With vineyards in Adelaide's nearby wine regions now looking gorgeous, now's the time to be heading north and south in search of great food. If you head north to the Barossa, it's not just **Hentley Farm's** wine portfolio that has put the place on the map but its restaurant, just up the road from the equally acclaimed Fino at Seppeltsfield. Housed in a beautifully restored 1840s stone stables overlooking the vineyards, Hentley Farm has become a gastronomic landmark under Barossa-born chef **Lachlan Colwill**. His two set menu options (diners are advised to allow up to four hours for the eight-plus course Discovery menu) are seasonal and largely Barossa-based, served to a possible 36 guests by one of seven chefs in the kitchen – each serving the dish they've just prepared such as pink snapper with a sour pesto of verjuice and oxalis (sour sobs) with a local mettwurst paste.

In a rustic touch, guests can watch their pork scotch fillet being grilled outdoors under the stars. Corner of Gerald Roberts and Jenke roads, Seppeltsfield. Open for lunch Thursday-Sunday, dinner Friday-Saturday; phone (08) 8562 8427.

Head south to the McLaren Vale region and again you'll be spoiled for choice, but none could dispute that the long-established **d'Arry's Verandah** isn't among the top choices. This is not a place where you'll want to rush lunch, especially if you enjoy the six-course degustation menu. Don't bother about madly sprinting from cellar door to cellar door. Sit back and enjoy the open fire, watch the mist sweep over rolling hills, admire the Dorper sheep grazing in the vineyard below – except, of course, they're also on chef **Peter Reschke's** menu as lamb bresaola, with lamb brain and roasted walnut mayonnaise. Key dishes include lobster and blue swimmer crab ravioli with lobster bisque, or chocolate and chilli braised kangaroo tail with kangaroo saddle. Wines include around 50 offerings from d'Arenberg, 35 of them by the glass. Hopefully you have a limo or a helicopter on call to take you home. d'Arry's Verandah, Osborne Rd, McLaren Vale. Open for lunch daily; phone (08) 8329 4848.

Adelaide's burgeoning wine bar scene just keeps on expanding, with some of the most interesting and well established examples opening well clear of Adelaide's CBD. **Bar Torino**, on Hutt St in the south-eastern corner of the city is among the best and was recently voted Best Small Bar in this year's local Restaurant and Catering Awards. What used to be a deli beside popular restaurant Chianti has been transformed into a sophisticated vermouth and tapas bar, blending the best of Spanish and Italian cuisine. It's attracting everyone from rusted-on Chianti clientele, local residents and CBD refugees with an often frenetic front bar area that morphs into quieter regions beyond.

Grab a Matchbox toy car token to run a tab while you tuck into tapas and pintxos (if not something larger) and demand another vermouth or something from the wine list. Bar Torino, 158 Hutt St, Adelaide. Open Tuesday-Sunday from 11am; phone (08) 8155 6010.

Above: View from d'Arry's Verandah, overlooking the rolling hills of McLaren Vale.