



SMALL, independently-owned hotels can often provide surprisingly good food and wine offerings, and the Caledonian Hotel, on the edge of Adelaide's CBD facing the northern parklands, is one of them. Its **Bartons Restaurant** has long held a reputation for an interesting menu and very sound cooking, and the current kitchen under head chef **Mark Johnson** is no exception. The restaurant is a pleasant room, filled with light through north-facing floor to ceiling windows, with outside tables available when the weather is suitable. An adjacent cafe area provides more than competent standard pub grub. Johnson's innovative menu consists entirely of well-priced but smaller entree-sized dishes, ranging from double-baked cheese soufflé with garlic cream sauce to slow cooked beef cheek and mushroom pie with sweet potato puree or prawn and crab ravioli with fennel and seafood sauce. There's the added bonus that if hungry diners order two dishes they'll get a third course thrown in free. But what sets Bartons really apart from the competition is its series of weekly wine dinners featuring leading wine makers – even dinners matched with cognac, beer, whisky and champagne. This must be one of very few places in Australia that can manage a highly demanding wine-matched dinner at least once a week year round. Generally priced at around \$88, they include five or six courses matched with up to 14 wines generally presented by their winemakers. One recent such dinner, featuring wines from Willunga 100, Yalumba and Running with Bulls, matched with up to three wines per course, 13 in all. General

manager and co-owner **Fiona Nairn**, who calls the dinners "my baby", started them 13 years ago after running similar dinners at Woodstock winery. With her chefs she's now worked out a repertoire of around 60 wine-friendly dishes, enabling them, she says, to "play with flavours". Upcoming dinners in November and December include wines from Tasmania and Mumm Champagne. Not surprisingly, Barton's has a good wine list, especially strong in sparklings and reds. Bartons Restaurant is open for lunch and dinner seven days and is at 219 O'Connell St, North Adelaide; phone (08) 8267 1375.

The success of **George Kasimatis** at his eponymous **Georges on Waymouth** has seen his restaurant live on as one of Adelaide's best places to mix business with a first rate lunch right in the middle of a rapidly expanding CBD restaurant precinct. Kasimatis has the business community taped which is why the restaurant often doubles as a venue for informal business meetings throughout the day – some sit in the front window to be seen, while others choose more discrete spaces further back. There's also a fine upstairs private dining room. But when it comes to lunch, the intent is serious, with terrific antipasto and a short daily specials menu. The regular menu is mostly based on classic Italian dishes such as a tortellini of osso bucco with green olive tapenade and crisp kale, or pressed lamb with pancetta and mustard fruits, but then there is also extra variety in dishes such as maple-glazed beef brisket with horseradish puree and dill pickles. Even lunchtime appetites usually stretch to concluding the meal with affogato,

house-made ice cream with espresso and almond biscotti. There's an excellent wine list with plenty by the glass. Georges on Waymouth, 20 Waymouth St, Adelaide is open for breakfast and lunch Monday-Friday and dinner Tuesday-Saturday; phone (08) 8211 6960.

From the outside **Ballaboosta** looks like an oversize garage - in fact it was once a laundromat - with customers spilling on to the street when the weather's fine. But when the weather closes in, so do the foldaway doors and inside is one of the coziest dining spaces in town, sitting almost on top of the huge wood oven that fires much of the menu. Ballaboosta is a Yiddish term for a mother who holds her family together with love and affection, and that's the warmth that infuses this restaurant. Start with classic Lebanese mezes, salads such as a super crunchy fresh fatoush, a very traditional Lebanese dish, or brilliant little pastries called sambousik, stuffed with minced beef and toasted pine nuts. There are hearty soups such as spicy lentil with rice and spinach, then main courses such as samak harra – literally hot fish, oven baked served with tahini and chilli sauce, or a wood-fired warm chicken salad. Everything comes with pillows of puffed up pita bread, straight from the wood oven. The wine list features highly individual local winemakers. With restaurant owner **Naj Moubayed's** mother, **Betty**, the "ballaboosta" in charge of the kitchen, this is a recipe for homespun hospitality at its best. Ballaboosta, 289 Halifax St, Adelaide is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner Monday-Saturday, breakfast and lunch Sunday; phone (08) 8232 1853.



Top left: The Caledonian restaurant interior. Above: Ballaboosta restaurant interior.