

ONE of the most anticipated restaurant openings in South Australia in the past year has been that of **Fino at Seppeltsfield** in the Barossa Valley, part of a massive \$3 million restoration program by Seppeltsfield owner Warren Randall. The redesign by architect Max Pritchard has created a total of three dining areas, the original 1850s bottling hall that includes the cellar door facilities, a semi-subterranean dining area housed within the 1868 bluestone wine fermentation tanks and an al fresco area overlooking a huge terraced courtyard and fountain. There were many dedicated customers of the original Fino at Willunga, 50km south of Adelaide, who wondered how owners **Sharon Romeo** and chef **David Swain** could possibly manage, at the same time, a sibling restaurant 80km north of the city and continue to provide the exceptional regionally-focused food for which they'd made their reputation. Swain's answer was to appoint another great regional chef **Ben Sommariva** (ex Pennys Hill) to take the helm at Fino Willunga, and move experienced Fino sous chef **Sam Smith** to head chef at Seppeltsfield, with both Swain and Romeo in effect helicoptering between the two. Swain is a chef who pioneered an almost obsessive focus on finding the best regional produce, with an open back door kitchen that welcomed local goodies, while Romeo mastered the art of a small wine list that sought out the best and most interesting local wines, while providing challenges with imports from around the world. Fino has won many awards on both fronts. Fino Seppeltsfield now joins two other acclaimed local restaurants, Appellation and Hentley Farm, in providing a showcase for Barossa produce such as Hutton Vale lamb (try the pasty with silverbeet and Kangaroo Island sheep's milk yoghurt) or Savannah chicken (with charred spring onion, wakame and sesame), Don's carrots, zucchini, preserved lemon and sorrel mayonnaise, or bacon broth with sherry-braised local wild rabbit. Wines, not surprisingly, include the full Seppeltsfield range of house wines, exclusive to the restaurant and cellar door, and of course the famed fortifieds, plus a typically eclectic list of Australian wines. Lunch daily, dinner Friday-Saturday, 730 Seppeltsfield Rd, Seppeltsfield; phone (08) 8568 6200.



One of the more attractive of Adelaide's new breed of bar/restaurants is **Mothervine**, located in what was previously the home of East End Cellars, which has now moved across the road to become the Tasting Room.

EEC owner **Michael Andrewartha** has teamed with partners Amalfi restaurateur **Frank Hannon-Tan** and **David Lemire MW** from Shaw & Smith to create a highly sophisticated wine bar, which even offers a Steve Pannell red and white wine on tap, and a great wine list with 20 or more specials offered by the taste or glass. The menu is small but goes beyond the usual snacky stuff, with large plates such as braised lamb and root vegetable pie, or a beef, saffron and date tagine, all prepared offsite by chef Ali Seedsman, with just a presentation kitchen on site, a formula that keeps quality high and consistent. The name, interestingly, comes from a clone of pinot noir, the MV6, or Mother Vine Six, which was part of the collection of grape vine cuttings brought to Australia by James Busby in 1832. Lunch Thursday-Saturday, dinner Tuesday-Saturday, 26-33 Vardon Ave, Adelaide; phone (08) 8227 2273.

Another opening has seen acclaimed Thai chef **Nu Suandokmai** take a culinary detour with the curiously named **Cliché**, a rather tongue-in-cheek take on French food by Adelaide's most successful restaurateur **Walter Ventura** who has taken the former and rather undistinguished French restaurant d'Artagnan and given it a very sparkly lift. Ventura knows how to create restaurants with instant appeal, that are lots of fun and where the cooking is good enough and cleverly priced to make it affordable and attractive to a

younger clientele. He's been the driving force behind Singapore House (Asian), British India (Indian), Ruby Red Flamingo (Italian), Mesa Lunga (Spanish), Lucky Lupitas (Mexican) among others, with interests in food chains Fasta Pasta (Italian) and Kwik Stix (Asian).

All of them are highly theatrical and visually entertaining, which is part of the fun, and at Cliché Ventura's visual theatrics have combined restaurant and bar with a gallery (the Winkler Gallery, curated by Walter Venturawitz) of bold, oversized images by 24 local artists that, in his words, "explore the French narrative and Gallic peculiarities". The same goes for the food, little of which would be found on the menu of a traditional restaurant in Paris but is French-styled and given a post-modern twist by Suandokmai and his team. Dishes such as crepes filled with lobster and prawn, Nu's mussels - the classic dish with white wine, garlic and parsley, "cheeky beef" - slow braised beef cheek with burnt onion aioli and crisp kale and Bardot's rack-lamb rack with a herb crust work very well. Prices are good, service is fast and friendly, and if you get past a cocktail called Frog in Your Throat, the wine list isn't bad either. For Nu's many fans, the possibly better news is that by mid-year he expects to be running an off-Gouger Street Thai street food diner and bar, where he will go back to the culinary roots that made his reputation, no doubt with Ventura providing yet another highly enticing environment. Dinner Tuesday-Saturday, 26 O'Connell St, North Adelaide; phone (08) 8267 4083.

Left: FINO at Seppeltsfield.