



WHILE everyone is waiting to see what sort of restaurant will evolve as part of Chester Osborne's \$14 million d'Arenberg Cube project in McLaren Vale, another wine region even closer to Adelaide has jumped ahead with a top-level restaurant as part of a similar multi-million dollar investment.

The newly-opened **Hardy's Verandah Restaurant** at Mt Lofty House, a fast 15 minutes drive from Adelaide, looks like finally realising the full potential of this stunning country house location and providing a major leap forward as far as food and accommodation in the Adelaide Hills wine region is concerned.

Around \$3 million has been spent on a new kitchen and relocated restaurant, with extraordinary views over the Piccadilly Valley, on top of \$2.5 million more spent by owners and hoteliers **David Horbutt** and **Malcolm Bean** on general refurbishment - and another \$6 million about to be spent building 15 so-called "six-star" villas all overlooking the valley below. They'll be priced at \$1000 to \$1500 a night, making them the dearest accommodation so far in South Australia. But it's in the restaurant where the immediate and most obvious changes have taken place, with the recruitment of well-credentialed head chef **Wayne Brown**, whose career includes stints at Urbane, Quay, Two Rooms (Tokyo), Waku Ghin (Singapore) and, most recently, head chef at Sake (Melbourne and Double Bay). He describes his cooking style as basically French but with a strong Japanese influence.



He's been joined by head sommelier **Patrick White**, one of the first Australian sommeliers to attain the Advanced Certificate offered by the Court of Master Sommeliers. He says his brief is to create "an extraordinary cellar". It's a task he says will take many hundreds of thousands of dollars and some time, but he's already made a start with a 400 bottle-plus wine and sake list. Two degustation menus are available, four-course and seven-course plus several tasting dishes to start, with many dishes centred around the charcoal Robata grill, such as chargrilled dry-aged duck breast with a mousse-like foie gras and apricot marmalade, or chargrilled full-blood waygu beef with fresh wasabi, smoked salt and crisp garlic chips. Hardy's Verandah Restaurant, Mt Lofty House, 72 Mt Lofty Summit Rd. Open for lunch Friday-Sunday, dinner daily; phone (08) 8339 6777.

While it's not uncommon for chefs to incorporate Japanese influences into their cooking, there's nothing like the real thing and that is most definitely found at **Ichitaro Dining**.

If good things come in small packages, then this is the perfect example, a tiny, sculptured space with black walls, woven rope sculptures and a huge chunk of weathered driftwood hanging overhead. Every dish reveals the same sense of exquisite detail, supervised by head chef **Satoshi Omori** in what is one of Adelaide's few Japanese owned and run restaurants. While the waygu beef tataki with roasted garlic sauce and truffled mash makes an excellent start, nothing rivals the ultra-fresh kingfish carpaccio or the excellent choice of sashimi.

Larger courses include tempura and teriyaki dishes, but the most difficult choice is between the roast duck with citrus sauce and yuzu pepper or the saikyo-style, miso-glazed black cod. Both sake menu and wine list are small but well chosen. Ichitaro Dining, 3/160 King William Rd, Hyde Park. Open for lunch Friday and Saturday, dinner Monday to Saturday; phone (08) 8272 8921.

The same team that originally put Ichitaro

Dining on the culinary map has moved on to take over another highly-acclaimed modern Japanese restaurant, Kenji, and renamed it **Nagomi Japanese Kitchen**.

Owner and head chef **Nobuki (Nobu) Hayashi** says the name, Nagomi, means "relaxing", and his intent is for the new restaurant to be comfortable and a little less formal, while at the same time delivering very traditional Japanese dishes. Nobuki has been joined by the very experienced **Akira Takahashi**, who heads up Nagomi's front of house, and who also worked with Nobu at Ichitaro Dining. With 24 years experience behind him, 18 years in Japan, Nobuki has all the right skills and will offer a high-level kaiseki menu as well as his regular menu, featuring popular dishes such as an exemplary saiko style black cod and the crispest tempura in town. There's also a traditional bento box, which changes monthly, quick order and set menus. Nagomi Japanese Kitchen, Shop 5, 242 Hutt St, Adelaide. Open for lunch Monday - Friday, dinner Monday - Saturday; phone (08) 8232 0944.

Even more relaxed, but even more like a slice of Tokyo relocated to Adelaide, is **Takumi Yakitori**, whose original owners modelled it on an almost identical yakitori grill in Tokyo as a hole in the wall local eatery.

Here it's slightly larger but just as noisy and gregarious, the sort of place where local Japanese residents feel right at home. Under owner, chef and headwaiter **Eddie Ye**, the menu also has grown to offer a large range of delicious grilled and skewered yakitori, along with popular dishes such as vegetable gyozas and tempura button mushrooms with green tea salt. Sauces and seasonings are all made in house, notably the tare sauce that adds a flavour boost to many of the grilled morsels. There's convivial booth seating or sit at the bar overlooking the grill and admire the range of nearly 30 Japanese whiskies. Takumi Yakitori, Shop 60, 55 Melbourne St, North Adelaide. Open for dinner Tuesday - Saturday; phone (08) 239 2111.

**Above:** Hardy's Verandah Restaurant.  
**Left:** Nagomi Japanese Kitchen.