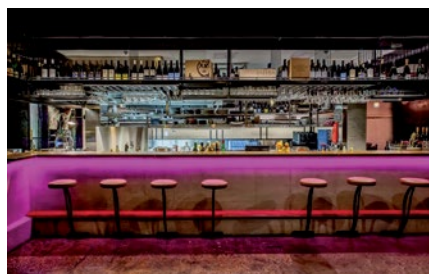




WHILE Melbourne moved through another winter - a little milder than winters past - we saw a few old hands (read: long-time professionals) in the hospitality business rebuild, reopen and extend their businesses and continue to feed a hungry Victorian audience.

Martin Pirc, the man behind Punch Lane, the 25-year-old CBD wine bar and restaurant, opened a luxurious basement bar called **Juliet**. Situated almost next door to Punch Lane, Juliet is a homage to women in the food and wine industry as well as a nod to Melbourne history. "The hospitality industry is one where women often do not receive the recognition they deserve," says Pirc. "Our goal is to showcase their hard work and evolve our menu over time so those who visit Juliet will get to sample and learn about an array of local and international female-created products and, if they get their timing right, maybe even meet the maker." Where does the history come in? Juliet is named after a chequered time in Melbourne's past. In the 1870s, Romeo Lane and Juliet Terrace were notorious for being one of Melbourne's first red light districts, home to ladies and men of the night. Both streets have been renamed - Crossley and Liverpool streets - and Juliet, the bar, is a way of keeping



Melbourne's inner-city history alive. To add to the feminine elements of the venue, there are cool pink touches bordering the bar, chandeliers, hand-blown glass pieces and warm woods to give comfort to the space. Guests can linger by the fireplace or sink into Danish chairs and lounges. The menu, by chef **Gabriel Alonso**, focuses on sharing and is designed to complement the drinks offering. The series of small plates with big flavours includes South Australian pan-fried sardines with a herbed remoulade; vitello tonnato with anchovies, fermented black garlic, quail eggs and olives; caciocavallo and parmesan stuffed zucchinis finished with truffle pecorino. Basement, 37-41 Little Bourke St, Melbourne; phone (03) 9639 4944.

Much-loved and respected chef **Paul Wilson** opened **Wilson & Market** to much acclaim. The British chef - who has called Australia home for over 20 years, has gained a solid following after heading up Raddi in the early '90s and The Botanical in the '00s - opened a multi-faceted business including bar, cafe and restaurant in the Prahran Market in the inner south-east. The chef has spent the last 10 years or so with a focus on the food of South America and Mexico but his classic French training has seen him lured back to creating seasonal, Euro-structured dishes - OK, there's still some Latino influences - through breakfast, lunch and dinner. Wilson is renowned for his punchy dishes and his ability to extract the boldest, big flavours out of quality produce and he's remained consistent with this at Wilson & Market. You'll find Kohlrabi, pear and radicchio salad with black tahini next to whiting carpaccio with Angelica Farm fennel, native capers and horseradish or Spanner crab seaweed crepe with celeriac. The wood barbecue is searing fresh seafood that changes daily and the rotisserie cranks all day with Milawa wood-red Ross chicken (half or whole), Milking Yard Farm Sommerlad chicken and a selection of beef, including Cape Grim rib-eye, celeriac and mustard remoulade, and O'Connor's dry-aged rump

of beef. There is something for everyone at Wilson & Market and a savvy wine selection at great prices. The generosity in boundless - take a group of friends - a serving for one feeds two or three! 163-185 Commercial Rd, South Yarra; phone (03) 9804 7530.

After a refit that began in mid-August, the cafe formerly known as Green Park is now **Park Street** with a new look, new menu and (some) new owners. Longtime co-owner and chef **Jesse Gerner** has brought partners from his other businesses - chef **Russell Hall** (Anada), chef **Andrew Fisk** (Bomba, Samuel Pepys), **Kelly O'Loghlin** (Bomba, Samuel Pepys) and **Shane Barrett** (Bomba, Samuel Pepys, Nomada) into the fold in Carlton North.

Utilising Park Street's kitchen garden and a solid stable of local suppliers, Hall, Fisk and Gerner have designed breakfast, lunch and dinner menus that are built to feed and maintain the strong local and family audience who love this location. Breakfast and lunch menus include dishes like spanner crab omelette with fermented chilli and herbs, a waffle filled with PX-braised beef cheek and cavolo nero alongside classic bacon, eggs, granolas and sides. Lunchtime sees sturdy sandwiches, pastas and pies as well as grab-and-go options such as a roast chicken and slaw roll or a zucchini and corn fritter wrap with chilli jam. Park Street has shifted the dinner focus to introduce a pasta and salads bar five nights a week along with a menu of Cicchetti; think just-shucked oysters, charcuterie and torn burrata with cherry tomato and basil crostini, supporting a changing selection of pastas that include linguine with clams and fusilli with wilted greens. 815 Nicholson St, Carlton North; phone (03) 9380 5499.



Top left: Park Street restaurant interior. Above: Food and drink from Park Street. Left: Juliet restaurant interior and food from Juliet.