



TWO highly respected chefs opened own ventures in Melbourne and we got an inner-city vegetarian/vegan pub, yep, not a parma or steak to be seen.

Chef **Joe Grbac's** first solo-business venture, **Saxe**, opened in October at 211 Queen St. Grbac who headed up the Press Club and was co-owner and executive chef of Collingwood's Saint Crispin opened the doors of his 70-seater and is bringing his menu of contemporary Australian dishes to the law and corporate precincts of the CBD. Saxe (short for Queen St's namesake Queen Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen) offers two-levels of city dining. The dining room upstairs brings a structured menu, with dishes such as asparagus and parmesan custard with white miso and pork scotch fillet, carrot picalili and taramosalata. Downstairs, on street-level, the bar and dining area will be more casual, while retaining the quality Grbac is renowned for. Think scrambled duck egg, spanner crab, roasted cauliflower and the bar snack known as Snack, Crackle, Pop (fried and popped pork crackle) that Grbac made popular at Saint Crispin. At the core of both menus is seasonality, provenance and value. Grbac is not bound by rules except to focus on the best produce he can get his hands on. At home he is a passionate gardener, keeps his own chickens and he is intent on bringing the same freshness and quality that he does for his family to the menu at Saxe. This element of care extends to the dining rooms. Grbac has employed the skills of designer Samantha Eades who has created an environment of comfort, warmth and style using light timbers, American oak and mirrors, accented with regal blue, a nod to the royal namesake. The wine program designed by Marc Esteve Matteau, whom Grbac worked with at Press Club will feature a list of boutique winemakers from Europe and Australia. 211 Queen St, Melbourne; phone (03) 9089 6699.

Huge news hit Melbourne in late September when renowned chef **Donovan Cooke** announced he was leaving his job of executive chef at the Atlantic in Crown after six years and going out on his own, opening **Ryne** in North Fitzroy in early October.

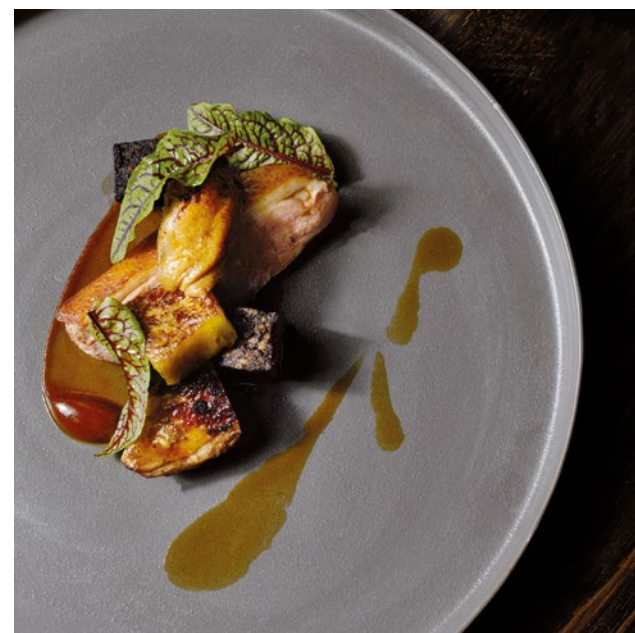
The trailblazing chef, co-opened Est Est Est in the late '90s and it changed the dining landscape in Melbourne significantly with its pared-back room and classically executed dishes. He then went on to open Ondine followed by a stint at the Hong Kong Jockey Club before returning to Melbourne to join the Atlantic. Now at Ryne, Cooke is flexing his creative muscles again while maintaining the strong skill and techniques that has seen him become one of the country's most respected chefs. Cooke has partnered with his long-time friend, colleague and culinary kindred spirit, **Alex Law**. Their 60-seat restaurant features a focused menu, opening its doors with spring entrees, spring mains, sides and spring desserts. The choices are clear - two courses for \$65, three for \$80, and a seven-course tasting menu for \$150. Guests will choose from dishes, including marron with pea panna cotta and scented with orange, foie gras and chicken liver parfait with crisp chicken skin, smoked rainbow trout with dashi-infused daikon and horseradish, and Valrhona chocolate souffle with three tastes of raspberry. Ryne's wine list showcases smaller, exclusive producers delivering distinctive tones of flavour; a mix of international - to complement the cuisine - and local - to support the beauty of what Australia offers. 203-205 St Georges Rd, Fitzroy North; phone (03) 9482 3002.

Nestled in the heart of Carlton on the corner of Lygon and Elgin streets, is an interesting new pub from hospitality veterans and well-known artists **Alison Whyte** and **Fred Whitlock**. The point of difference with this new venture is the **Green Man's Arms** is completely vegan and vegetarian, with an Israeli-influenced menu from head chef **David Raziel**.

The Green Man's Arms' take on pub snacks includes house-made falafel made to a legendary secret Jerusalem recipe and the Yemeni lahu bread - a pan-baked soft, fluffy tortilla-like bread made to order with a choice of falafel, tahini, pickles and parsley; fried eggplant, soft egg, Israeli salad and tahini; or green beans, mushroom argue and fresh creamed corn. Mains include a grilled vegetable salad of beets, red cabbage, onions, almonds on labne and pomegranate dressing with pita bread, and housemade cous cous with vegetable stock and roasted vegies. Patrons will be tempted by desserts such as home-made halva ice cream and fresh ricotta wrapped in crunchy knafeh pastry with pistachios, pickled grapes and syrup. In another departure from the regular



pub model, Green Man's Arms owns all of its beer taps so you can share a jug of local craft brews such as Hawkers Pilsner, Stomping Ground Saison and Holgate Mt Macedon Pale Ale. Also on tap is kombucha, so designated drivers don't have to miss out on a refreshing fermented beverage. Kombucha also finds its way on to the cocktail list in the kombucha spritz. The wine list, similarly populated by local producers, is completely vegan and features interesting drops such as De Bortoli's Vinoque Yarra Valley Nebbiolo Rosé and Lobethal Road Pinot Gris from the Adelaide Hills. 418 Lygon St, Carlton; phone (03) 9347 7419.



Top left: Interior of Saxe restaurant.

Top right & above: Food from Saxe restaurant.