

melbourne grapevine

HILARY McNEVIN

THERE'S loads of fruit on the Grapevine this edition, with one of our favourite chefs moving to head up the kitchens of our newest CBD hotel and we're revisiting some favourites in town that are so consistent they've been on our radar for years.

The QT hotel group opened in Melbourne just over two years ago and towards the end of 2017 it appointed chef **Andrew Harmer** as the hotel's executive chef. Harmer initially trained at Paul Heathcote Lancashire in England, before taking his experience international, working at various premium restaurants around the world such as Les Crayerers in France - a two Michelin Star restaurant - and more notably at D.O.M with Alex Atala, a Brazilian chef whose restaurant is rated no.16 by The S.Pellegrino World's 50 Best Restaurants. He was executive chef of The Point in Albert Park prior to his role at QT and executive chef of the Vue de Monde group for seven years before that. He knows his stuff. His approach to food is elegant, sophisticated and bold, and throughout his culinary journey he has built on the foundations of professionalism, organisation and maintaining the utmost respect for the best produce available. The flagship restaurant for QT Melbourne is **Pascale Bar & Grill** and Harmer has designed a menu that is laid out between raw, entrees, grill, Jospier dishes - a Jospier oven is a wood-fired oven and wonderful for roasting meats and vegetables - rotisserie, sides and dessert. Some of his dishes are already claiming signature status, including grilled calamari, burnt cucumber, quinoa and finger lime, WA wood-fired marron, chorizo blanc and desert lime, and roasted dry-aged duck with honey and lavender. The meat lovers won't be disappointed with a 1.4kg Ranger Valley bone-in rib from New South Wales. The wine list has an international scope, in keeping with the broad market the hotel group has, and there's a tight list of boutique gins, vodkas and whiskies from Australia and abroad. 133



Russell St, Melbourne; phone (03) 8636 8800.

The Hell of the North is the name given to a one-day, 260km bike event in the north of France, considered to be hellish due to the roads ridden during the race, many of which are cobbled with bluestone. Six years ago when business partners **Adam Ferrante** and sommelier **Mark Grixti** were building the interior of the comfortable bistro, it was such hard work they felt they were in some kind of hell. Jokes about hell and being in the north (Fitzroy is in Melbourne's inner-north) led to the name and it stuck. The majority of the building is bluestone, so there's one connection to the bike race, and the food and wine at **Hell of the North** is very much based in French technique. Voila! The new menu is embracing the cooler months with seasonal, warming flavours, think farro, lentil and quinoa salad with mushrooms and hazelnut, a play on the classic southern-French dish of bouillabaisse, with a fillet of barramundi and prawn bisque, with rouille and fennel. It's hard to go past the roasted Milawa duck breast with braised red cabbage and Madiera jus with a glass of pinot noir from Grixti's evolving and classic wine list. The sommelier's knowledge is intense and vast, and he's constantly where you might have a Four Pines Ale followed by a 2015 Tissot Patchwork Arbois Chardonnay, or a 2014 Domaine de Viranel Trilogie Syrah Cabernet Alicante-Bouschet Vin de Pays de Cessenon from the Languedoc, and there's a host of Australian drops, too. Chalmers Rosato Aglianico Sagrantino Nero d'Avola from Heathcote, anyone?

There's the warmth of wood with an industrial edge, but they've added classic bistro touches, brass and blackened steel to a room that was once on the shabby side. It is less than half a block from the buzz of Collingwood's Smith St and is definitely worth a visit. 135 Greeves St, Fitzroy; phone (03) 9417 6660.

Catapulting Indian dining into a contemporary context, **Atta** has been changing the perception of Indian cuisine since launching in Albert Park almost a year ago. Diners have been spoilt with delicate and delicious dishes that showcase the potential of

the flavourful dishes and now they want to get their customers to enjoy great Australian wines with the layered flavours of their food. Atta has launched a new menu where diners can pair dishes with premium wines. This includes the new Sukha gol gappa - plain flour gol gappa, (Atta's take on pani puri) with potato, chickpeas, sweet hung yogurt and aam panna, which can be paired with the Howard Vineyard Pinot Gris from the Adelaide Hills. The Chooza Chettinad - spicy chicken balls, mustard tempered aromatic sauce and goats cheese can be paired with the Yering Station Village Chardonnay from the Yarra Valley.

The Lamb Paatra - braised lamb shoulder, steamed and fried colocasia leaf with naan or puffed rice can be paired with the Mount Langi Hollows Shiraz from the Grampians. Executive chef and Atta owner **Harry Dhanjal** says: "Our customers have been enjoying our extensive wine list so it made sense for us to offer wine matching to help bring out the flavours of the dishes and create a special experience."

Other premium wines on the menu include a range of Laurent Perrier champagnes, the 2008 Paringa Estate Pinot Noir from Mornington Peninsula, the 2005 Geoff Merrill Henley Shiraz from McLaren Vale, the 2014 Jean Marc Brocard 1st Cru de Vay Chablis, the 2012 Hutton Vale Farm Grenache Mataro from Eden Valley and many more. 159 -161 Victoria Ave, Albert Park; phone (03) 9696 3388.



Top: Grilled Calamari from Pascale Bar & Grill.
Left: Interior of Pascale Bar & Grill.
Above: Andy Harmer of QT Melbourne.