

adelaide grapevine

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ANYONE who's been around Adelaide restaurants long enough will remember Marco Furlan as the best Italian waiter in town when he commanded the floor at the long-established favourite **Amalfi**.

Then he reappeared as the owner-chef at beachside restaurant **Café Salsa** where he won a resounding reputation as much for his feisty, often fiery, personality in the kitchen as for his wonderful and often bold take on southern Italian cooking.

Now Marco has resurfaced again, this time in the heart of Adelaide's CBD at **La La La**. Instead of the sound of surf in the distance and a palm-fringed cabana out the front, this time he's taken space under an office and apartment block in Gilles St – but, happily, nothing can bury a chef like Marco and his food is every bit as good as he served at Salsa, in fact better.

He named the place for his mother, a singer who, when she forgot the words to a song, would sing “la, la, la”, as one does. He also managed to capture the best restaurant chairs in Adelaide when the former Alhutte closed down, all soft black leather, ensuring his customers are the best seated in town.

They'll also get some of the best Italian cooking, with dishes such as very simply treated grilled calamari, served with chilli



and a dash of balsamic, or an exemplary vitello tonnato, perfectly poached served with tuna mayonnaise.

Another classic, saltimbocca, is also a perfect rendition – top quality veal layered with prosciutto, served with roast vegetables on the side. Perhaps his best dish, although not always available, is a baked duck risotto, where the rice has been cooked in duck stock, served with pistachio crumble on top. La La La, 19 Gilles St, Adelaide. (08) 8212 3535. Open for lunch Monday to Saturday, dinner Tuesday to Saturday.

After 20 years of neglect, historic **Electra House** on King William Street was given a \$10 million makeover to create a ground-floor bar and a modern Greek restaurant, **Olea**, upstairs. Despite having a highly credentialed Spanish chef at the helm, it never quite worked and in time was redesigned and renamed **Level One**, this time with another well-credentialed Japanese chef at the stoves creating very competent Asian fusion dishes.

Again, the food offering was excellent but failed to take off. Now, in its third attempt to win Adelaide diners, Level One looks as if it's made the grade with Korean chef **Jamie Kang** in charge of the kitchen and a very competent floor staff in charge of the customers.

The fusion of Korean and Japanese cooking has proven to be a highly popular combination, bringing together the best of both cuisines and chef Kang sure knows how to do it. He's also had considerable experience working with Italian chefs, so it's not surprising to find the occasional Italian influence on some of his dishes, more in technique rather than produce or flavour. Dishes such as ravioli with ricotta and shitake mushroom and miso cream, or thickly-cut kingfish sashimi on fermented white kimchi are examples of this.

The result is a menu that challenges in all the right ways, provides enormous flexibility and variety for the diner, and is sufficiently innovative to please culinary thrill seekers. The salmon aburi, with chopped and layers of salmon on crisply-seared sushi-style rice, with a sweet soy glaze makes a terrific start to the meal, as do the “snowed corn” – deep-fried, crisp corn balls held together



with teriyaki mayonnaise and topped with a “snow” of finely grated salted ricotta.

Among the meat courses, the standout dish is the free range pork belly, three thick cutlets that have been slow cooked overnight then chargrilled, with a richly-flavoured Korean spicy chilli sauce. The wine list, though not especially long, has much of interest. Level 1, 131 King William St, Adelaide. (08) 7123 4055. Open for lunch Friday, dinner Tuesday to Saturday.

You're in the city, it's late, you want to eat and you don't want to go Chinese, which you'll easily find in Gouger Street. One of the better options, as its name might suggest, is **Midnight Spaghetti** atop the **Crown and Anchor Hotel**.

Ignore the seething downstairs bar scene and follow the glowing neon noodle up to this beautifully restored broad balcony restaurant.

At midnight, “midnight spaghetti” is all you'll get, but what a sublime and delicious pasta dish it is, packed with chilli, anchovies, garlic, parsley and other good things guaranteed to see you through the night.

Earlier, there's much more on offer, such as pappardelle with beef cheek ragu or a properly made carbonara. Don't want pasta? Then try the Goolwa cockles in wine and garlic, or lamb chops with king prawns and asparagus. Terrific vegetarian side dishes include a couple of fat burrata sitting on chargrilled broccoli and cauliflower.

Generous, noisy, you'll want to stay up even later. The short wine list is just as enticing. 196 Grenfell St, Adelaide. (08) 7123 6125. Open for dinner Wednesday to Sunday. 🍷

Top left: La La La restaurant interior.
Bottom left: Vitello Tonnato from La La La restaurant.
Top right above: Level One restaurant interior.
Top right below: Salmon Aburi Level One.