



IN the middle of Sydney's long run of wet weather in October, **Matteo Downtown** was packed for lunch on a dreary Tuesday. Once inside the dining room, after traversing the bar and outdoor area, the atmosphere was pure Rome, right down to the snappily dressed waiters in perfectly matched separates and expensive sneakers. **Adam Abrams, Eddie Levy** and chef **Ozario D'Elia** of The Adored Group have reprised the success of Matteo Double Bay, opened in 2017, in the heart of the city adjacent to Australia Square. But there's a lot more on offer than the double-proved pizza dough that made the Eastern suburb's outpost such a must-dine. Matteo Downtown boasts Sydney's first mozzarella bar for starters. The fresh cheeses are delivered daily from multi-award winning producer La Stella Latticini. I have a passion for burrata and the cow milk burrata, nettle, sea vegetables and trout roe is the stuff of an addict's fantasies. Other diners were tucking the buffalo mozzarella and house-cured kurobuta capocollo, cow milk ricotta, Blackmore wagyu bresaola and giusti aged balsamico, and cow milk straciatella and prawns crudo with equal gusto. Following the opening act it was time to take in the surroundings. Design firm **Acme & Co**, responsible for The Grounds of Alexandria, Fred's and Felix Bar fit outs, have crafted a surprisingly intimate dining room of slick white tiles and banquette seating, a swish bar area that would make the grade in Milan and an open kitchen. The two bespoke pizza ovens, handmade by the Visciano family of Naples, are put to good use. But Matteo Downtown is open all day for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Office workers can pop in for fresh-baked pastries such as sfogliatella and ravioli dolci or standout egg dishes like uovo in purgatorio and cacio e pepe - scrambled eggs with pecorino cheese, Italian pork sausages, cannellini beans and miche bread - before heading to work. Pizzas are popular for lunch, but a high proportion of suits prefer meatier fare such as pork cutlet Milanese, pickled baby peppers and seasonal fragrant leaves, Mirrool Creek lamb backstrap, Jerusalem artichokes and mint potato croquettes and free-range pan-roasted quails and farro salad for a business lunch or early dinner. Those with less time to spare can grab a pasta such as the housemade bucatini alla gricia or a panino. Anyone scheduling a late afternoon meeting should consider the two-hour aperitivo from 4pm to 6pm weekdays. Or linger over an edited list of craft

beers, house wines on taps, Italian spirits and liqueurs and the 300-strong international wine selection with a strong bias towards Italy. Matteo Downtown, 20 Bond St, Sydney; phone (02) 9241 2008. On Friday evenings the **Quarrymans Hotel** in Pyrmont is crammed with young creatives and management from the nearby ad and design agencies. The heritage-listed pub closed for renovations in 2013 and re-emerged as a craft beer mecca with 26 taps and independent brands, including Young Henrys, Stone & Wood, FogHorn and CoConspirators. The main bar is emblazoned with the legend - In Hops We Trust. But there really is something for everyone as you climb up the narrow staircases to each floor from the outdoor courtyard, first floor meeting and venue space with its own bar to the latest addition - **The Rooftop**. Sydney has experienced a rash of rooftop bar openings recently, tracking the established trend in Europe and New York. Designer **Matt Woods**, renowned for the interiors of Bloodwood and Devon, has curated a hideaway with city views that takes its cue from a grab bag of inspirations. The pastels are very Miami Art Deco with an abundance of cacti and greenery adding an American desert overlay. There's porthole openings, Scandi furniture, copper panels, exposed brick and a pink DJ booth that keeps things thumping for the weekend crowd. A stone's throw from Darling Harbour and The Star casino, visitors to Sydney should experience at least one sunset drinks session here. The health conscious can blur the lines with one of the spritzes such as the kombucha spritz with Finlandia grapefruit vodka. Or sip a craft beer, cocktail or glass of wine from the expertly curated list. Classic pub grub with California/Mex touches is on hand for those who need to soak up their alcohol intake. Servings are generous so take care not to over-order. We started with a chunky guacamole dip and bruschetta which would have been enough for light eaters. Many of the younger male patrons needed more sustenance after a day at work and were drawn to the bangers and mash with onion gravy, fish and chips and pickle fried chicken burger with a huge order of fries. Need to share? Fill up with the buffalo wings with blue cheese sauce, chicken tacos with salsa fresca or salmon poke salad with ginger and mentsuyu sauce. The Rooftop, Quarrymans Hotel, 214-216, Harris St, Pyrmont; phone (02) 9660 0560. Open noon Wednesday to Sunday.

For decades the Evening Star hotel in Surry Hills was known as the "evil star" because many of its patrons were tabloid journalists from News Corps' Holt St HQ. There was a brief moment of international fame when Nirvana's doomed Kurt Cobain dropped by for a game of pool. Marvan Hotels, owners of Westmead Hotel and The Flynn, have spruced up the property with a theme that would have made earlier patrons gasp. Re-born as **Gweilo**, Cantonese slang for Westerners which translates as "ghost man", the old Anglo bolthole dating back to 1873 now has a pan-Asian menu more in keeping with the local apartment owners and students from the nearby universities. The head chef is **Sebastian Gee**, who has worked in some of Sydney's finest Asian eateries, including Kid Kyoto, China Diner, China Lane and Sailors Thai. The new decor is slightly Blade Runner - the first film - with a retro-vintage vibe. So are the prices on a Saturday night when \$10 will get you a beer and a bao. The wine list caters to deeper pockets and more sophisticated tastes from Mumm Champagne through Laurent Savoye Fleurie la Cadole Gamay from Burgundy, Dr. H. Thanisch Riesling Kabinett from Germany and local bottlings such as Spring Seed Morning Bride Organic Rosé and Battle of Bosworth Shiraz. There's hot-to-trot cocktails such as Nori Spect - Nori whisky, kaffir lime and lemongrass syrup - to play up the Suzie Wong vibe. The menu is divided into "Smalls" and "Bigs" and the creative, cross-cultural combos really work. Think haloumi, hot and sour peppers, olives and betel leaves and eggplant parmi - eggplant and parmesan katsu with Napoli sauce. Standouts in the larger dishes include the snapper, grilled shallot and enoki mushrooms, and the wagyu beef shin, carrot and Tooheys New rendang. A wonderful local take on trendy Hong Kong restaurants like Happy Paradise that skilfully mix Cantonese cooking with Western flavours and techniques. Gweilo, 360 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills; phone (02) 9281 8177. 🍷



Top left: Food and drinks from The Rooftop. Above: Exterior of The Rooftop.