



ORSO has been Adelaide's most exciting restaurant opening for the year so far, having been two years in the making by chef-restaurateur **Andre Ursini**.

Ursini's previous, and ongoing restaurant, Andre's Cucina & Polenta Bar, has long been a city favourite. Solidly Italian in style, it quickly moved beyond polenta to include a hugely popular menu of mostly traditional dishes.

Orso (which means "bear" in Italian), while still having an Italian flavour, has a menu that swings through a much wider arc of Mediterranean influences. Head chef **Will Doak** oversees a spectacular open kitchen, with a wood grill and Jospier oven providing much culinary fire.

The dishes are grouped as snacks - the crunchy croquette filled with creamy potato and taleggio cheese, with a Calabrese chilli sauce is the go here; smaller - look for a new take on beef tartare with chopped waygu rump cap, roasted hazelnuts, preserved lemons and capers; and pasta - try the braised rabbit ragu on broad strips of pappardelle with fried sage. Then it's time for the larger dishes, when you can see what they do with the wood grill - that could be a 9+ waygu rump with spiced beetroot; and the Jospier oven, where the standout dish has to be the stunning whole flounder dressed with a powerfully flavoured Italian-style XO sauce.

Orso is a gorgeously designed space, with terrific noise control despite its size and space, whose style extends into the adjoining Wilmott's Gastronomica, a bar and enoteca named after the family butcher's shop that once occupied this former corner shop. It makes a pleasant spot for a pre (or post) dinner drink. Orso, 36 Kensington Rd, Rose Park. Open for lunch and dinner Tuesday-Saturday, brunch Sunday; phone (08) 8364 1008.

Since he was first named McLaren Vale's

Bushing King some four decades ago, an honour he's repeated three times in his extraordinary career, **Steve (Serafino) Maglieri** has been one the region's most respected winemakers.

So when he took over the former McLaren's on the Lake and renamed its restaurant **Serafino**, as well as making it the headquarters for his Serafino Wines, it was no surprise that he made sure the food matched his reputation for wine.

That was achieved very early on, but successive chefs have continued to raise the bar, with new chef **Daniel Armon** more than meeting that challenge. Lifting what was already a very competent menu, Armon now presides over what is now one of the best in a region already endowed with a string of very high calibre winery restaurants. Serafino is not to be outdone in its location, either, with windows covering a sweeping view of manicured lawns, a vast dam and its many feathered inhabitants. Although you could lunch here quickly, it really is a place where you can relax and linger a while.

Armon draws on his extensive regional experience, as well as his large kitchen garden, in taking familiar Italian dishes into new territory. These include dishes such as a charred zucchini flower filled with smoked eggplant puree and a smear of smoked tahini on the side, topped with toasted buckwheat and chopped tomato.

There are perfect rounds of house-made goat's cheese panna cotta with smoked almonds, vanilla oil and baby cos, while main courses include pan-seared smoked duck breast with a Davidson plum jus and pumpkin puree.

Perhaps the most sensational dish comes right at the end, a dessert of smoked chocolate mousse with blueberry sorbet, sour cherry foam and shards of cocoa nib glass served in a smoke-filled Terremoto ("earthquake") wine box, celebrating Serafino's signature



wine. Serafino, Kangarilla Rd, McLaren Vale. Open for lunch Thursday-Sunday, dinner daily; phone (08) 8323 8911.

Coccobello also represents an expansion by one of Adelaide's most successful restaurateurs, this time **Lauro Siliquini**, co-owner of perennial crowd-pleasing favourites Ruby Red Flamingo and Tony Tomatoes, plus the ever-changing single dish diner currently trading as Spaghetti Meatballs.

Before venturing into restaurant ownership, Siliquini was one of Adelaide's most recognised Italian waiters, so he really does know what works and what doesn't. Here at Coccobello, he's put everything he knows to work in creating a very solid and reliable neighbourhood restaurant.

He's given it a very distinct personality plus a menu of all-time favourite Italian dishes cooked just like mamma used to make them. Sprawling through several rooms, despite its contemporary styling, Coccobello feels very Italian from its amiable and competent floor staff to classic dishes such as tortellini in brodo, handmade by the chef's wife, whose simple appearance disguises its fabulous flavours.

Another don't-miss dish is the pan-seared wild barramundi stacked high with really good roasted tomatoes, red onions and croutons - and of course there's a long list of pizzas from a monster-sized oven that can contain up to 18 pizzas at a time, and all the pasta is house-made. Terrific value, lots of fun. Coccobello, 209 Glen Osmond Rd, Frewville. Open for lunch Friday, dinner Tuesday-Saturday; phone (08) 7225 9599.

Top left: Flounder with XO sauce from Orso restaurant.

Top right: Wagyu beef from Orso restaurant.

Below left: Goats cheese panna cotta from Serafino restaurant.

Below right: Smoky dessert from Serafino restaurant.

