

All the old favourites, plus more, was the promise behind the new incarnation of Sydney stalwart PORTENO, reopened in the former MoVida site in Surry Hills. Meat eaters will be relieved that owners Ben Milgate and Elvis Abrahanowicz have chosen to keep the signature Argentinian fire pit that defined the previous venue (still open for events), but the menu has sufficient scope to satisfy pescatarian and vegetarian diners. Calamares asado - SA calamari with three styles of cucumber, dill and oyster cream - and humita de choclo - corn and cheese tamale with coriander and lime sauce - sit nicely alongside dishes rich with blood sausage, sweetbreads and a wood-fired animal of the day, while a new glassed-in cellar houses drops via Italy and America to go with South American and Australian pours.



TABLETALK

Relaunched over two levels formal upstairs, more casual downstairs - is Melbourne's Southbank institution PURE SOUTH DINING. Chef David Hill maintains his love of Tassie produce with all-day offerings, be it a textural wild scallop pie (above), Flinders Island lamb, or hotcakes with Pyengana Dairy Company cream for breakfast.

Adelaide restaurateurs Peter De Marco and Phillip Tropeano go via Palm Springs and Italy for their latest opening, CHICCO PALMS in Brooklyn Park. With a fit-out by Africola designer James Brown, it's no-frills fun, with plates of calabrese mac & cheese, pizzas and cotoletta alla Milanese stealing the show.

Enmore is home to Merivale's latest Sydney entrant, QUEEN CHOW, where Patrick Friesen and Chris Hogarth (ex-Papi Chulo) team up with dim sum master Eric Koh (ex-Mr Wong) for Cantonese classics mixed with pub grub. Head upstairs to THE SMELLY GOAT for curious cocktails, too.

After setting up shop in Singapore, Perth and Sydney, I the heat is on at newly opened LONG CHIM at Crown in Melbourne, where David Thompson brings the fire with authentic Thai fare. Chilli fans will love his chicken green curry, while crab fried rice hits the spot more gently.

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TARTARE 2.0

» Lee Ho Fook, Melbourne Chinese and French meld in Victor Liong's Sichuan-pepper-laced wagyu tartare with flavours of mapo tofu (above), which has crunch from fried shallots and creaminess from a silken tofu emulsion.

» Monster kitchen and bar, Canberra Crisp sheets of black rice accompany the tartare at Monster (left) in Hotel Hotel, the perfect foil for Boxgum Grazing beef, miso-cured yolk and avocado, lifted with a hit of horseradish.

» Gerard's Bistro, Brisbane Tartare turns Middle Eastern with Ben Williamson's laham nayyeh arriving as minced lamb with harissa and preserved lime, plus dabs of cured yolk.

Edited by David Matthews

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