

The hot list.

We asked Australia's top food and travel journalists to nominate the country's best new food weekends. Here's what they had to say



If you're in-the-know (or let's face it, even if you're not), you'd be aware that gourmet getaways are *the* holiday of the moment. But once you've eaten your way through umpteen courses at our most awarded restaurants, and sipped on the chardonnays, saufs and chenin blancs of our most beloved wine regions, where does the next notch in your belt come from? Fear not, we asked six epicurean and travel experts to cook up, in no particular order, a list of the 10 hottest foodie experiences of right now. You might not know about them yet (although we'd be surprised if you haven't heard whispers), but trust us, these experiences are going to be talked about a lot more in the very near future. Hopefully by your very happy companions, when you take them with you for a taste-test. Bon appetit.

The panel



Winsor Dobbin

FOOD AND WINE WRITER WHO HAS ENJOYED A GLASS OF WINE (OR TWO) IN ALMOST EVERY WINE REGION IN AUSTRALIA



Georgia Rickard

EDITOR OF AUSTRALIAN TRAVELLER WHO DEVOTES MUCH TIME TO EXPERIENCING AUSTRALIA'S FINEST MENUS IN THE NAME OF 'RESEARCH'

Andrew Bain

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE WRITER WHO HAS DUG OUT (AND EATEN) WITCHETTY GRUBS AND HONEY ANTS



Carla Grossetti

FOOD AND TRAVEL WRITER WHO HAD HER FIRST ESPRESSO AT THE AGE OF EIGHT



Kerry Heaney

FOOD BLOGGER WHO HAS SEARCHED FOR AUSTRALIA'S BEST CUPCAKE AND DINED WITH ANTONIO CARLUCCIO



Miranda Luby

TRAVEL, FOOD AND LIFESTYLE WRITER WHO HAS SAMPLED THE WINE OF THE POPES IN FRANCE



1 The spice of life

SUNSHINE COAST HINTERLAND, QUEENSLAND

Nestled along a ridge on the rolling greenness of the Blackall Ranges, **Spicers Clovelly Estate** in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland is a world of elegant French Provincial country estate relaxation. Taking its name from the lofty height of chef Cameron Matthews, **The Long Apron's** two-hatted menu will surprise you with rose petals freshly plucked from the kitchen garden, snail kiev and hay cream potatoes. Eat, sleep and then learn how to cook French- or Italian-style dishes from the master himself: Cameron freely shares his preparation and presentation secrets along with personal recipes at the restaurant's cooking classes, which are held every Saturday at nearby **Spicers Tamarind Retreat** with transfers included. spicersretreats.com

SPICERS CLOVELLY

2

Destination dining

BOWRAL, NSW

Feed your soul with Southern Highlands greenery and your stomach with the cleverly curated produce that the folk at **Biota Dining** call food. At Biota – in Bowral – it's all about extracting the perfect essence of taste and aroma from artisan goods grown locally or even on-site in the restaurant's extensive kitchen garden and hothouse. The ducks paddling in the restaurant's pond are safe, but not so the seasonal garden harvest which is turned into exquisite dishes using exotic techniques. Book into one of 13 Scandinavian-style 'comfortable resting spots', and time your visit with the **Southern Highlands Markets** – held on the last Sunday of each month on site at Biota. There's destination dining, and then there's Biota, which really deserves a category of its own to match its swag of awards and hats. biotadining.com



BIOTA DINING



TULIP BAR AND RESTAURANT

3 The up-and-coming gourmet scene GEELONG, VICTORIA

'I'll have what he's having' takes on new meaning when you're talking about Ben Shewry. And the globally-praised **Attica** chef (his fans include René Redzepi and David Chang) is having food from Geelong. Shewry, who calls the Victorian city home, says he's "blown away" by the quality he finds when he dines and forages for produce there. Check out the nearby Otway Hinterland, home to ex-Royal Mail chef Dan Hunter's new fine dining venture **Brae**, and then return to Geelong's urban streets to dine on Matt Dempsey's modern Australian cuisine at **Tulip Bar and Restaurant** and the young and edgy **Zigrids Dining Hall/Bar**. After quaffing a few vinos at Melbourne-chic **Union Street Wine**, you can slip into a foodie coma from your comfy ocean-view pad at the boutique **Vue Apartments**. vueapartments.com.au



HOTEL HOTEL'S BAR AND LOUNGE

6 Top-notch nosh a capital idea CANBERRA'S NSW

The pulse of Canberra has quickened with a growing number of hot ticket dining options of late. Narrow your focus to **NewActon** and linger at the **Močan & Green Grout** with a rich ristretto and scrumptious salami toastie. Chef Sean McConnell has upped the ante with a retro-poppy lobby restaurant at **Hotel Hotel** named **Monster Kitchen and Bar**. The only thing 'beastly' about Monster, however, is having to share that plate of wagyu flank, baby leek, soubise and ash. In nearby Civic, **Temporada**, co-owned by restaurateur Ben Willis from Griffith's lauded **Aubergine**, is a temptress with grilled thrills like quail with polenta or pressed pig's head with creamy slaw. If it's booze you're after, mooch over to the speakeasy-style small bar, **Molly** in Hobart Place before heading back to **Hotel Hotel**. hotel-hotel.com.au



HUON VALLEY

4 Paddock-to-plate HUON VALLEY, TASMANIA

For some of Australia's most authentic paddock-to-plate experiences head to the southernmost municipality: Tasmania's Huon Valley. You can pick berries fresh from roadside hedgerows, fish for river trout or sample artisan ciders from the same shed in which the apples were processed. Sample great sushi at **Masaaki's** in Geeveston, local produce at cafés like the **Red Velvet Lounge** and **The Lotus Eaters Café** in Cygnet; ciders at **Willie Smiths**, **Pagan** and **Frank's**, or cool-climate wines at **Home Hill**, **Elsewhere Vineyard**, **Panorama Vineyard** or **Two Bud Spur**. Stock up on organic free-range beef and pork from the farm gate at **Nicholls Rivulet Organic Food Farm** (the home-made pies are especially good) and make sure to take home some hand-crafted **Cygnature Chocolates**, imbued with seasonal fruits and local liqueurs. The luxurious **Villa Howden** makes an ideal base from which to explore the Huon and adjacent Channel region. villahowden.com.au

5 Fresh Squeezes ORANGE, NSW

There are now more reasons than ever to enjoy an indulgent weekend away in Orange. Exhibit A: the menu at **The Agrestic Grocer**, where dishes such as seared venison with beetroot spelt risotto are a true expression of the area. **The Rustic Café** is also a retail space for farmers and home to **Badlands Brewery** tasting house. Caff-fiends can get their buzz on at **Factory Espresso**, the HQ of local roaster, **Bill's Beans**, while **Bissy's Café** is also on the hot list for a menu informed by the 'zero food miles' principle. Wine lovers should wander to **Ferment**, a one-stop shop with more than 100 wines on offer; The **Swinging Bridge** also has an in-town cellar door with wines worth swooning over. And contemplate that tree change with a stay at **Borrodell Vineyard**. borrodell.com.au



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7

Ham-let it up **AUBURN, CLARE VALLEY, SA**

It may only be a tiny speck on the map, but the hamlet of Auburn in Clare Valley punches well above its weight in the gourmet stakes. The new **Clare Valley Brewing Co** tasting room offers a range of local beers and ciders on tap, as well as wines from **Jeanneret** and **Good Catholic Girl**, while the **Grosset**, **Mount Horrocks** and **Taylor's** cellar doors are also worth a visit. At the new **Terroir** restaurant, chef Dan Moss specialises in local flavours (all ingredients are sourced within 100 miles), while you'll find some of the best pub grub in the state at revamped **Rising Sun Hotel** next door. Catch some shut-eye in one of the lovely, rustic cottages at **Mellers at Auburn** (previously Cygnets) before another day's gorging. mellersofauburn.com.au

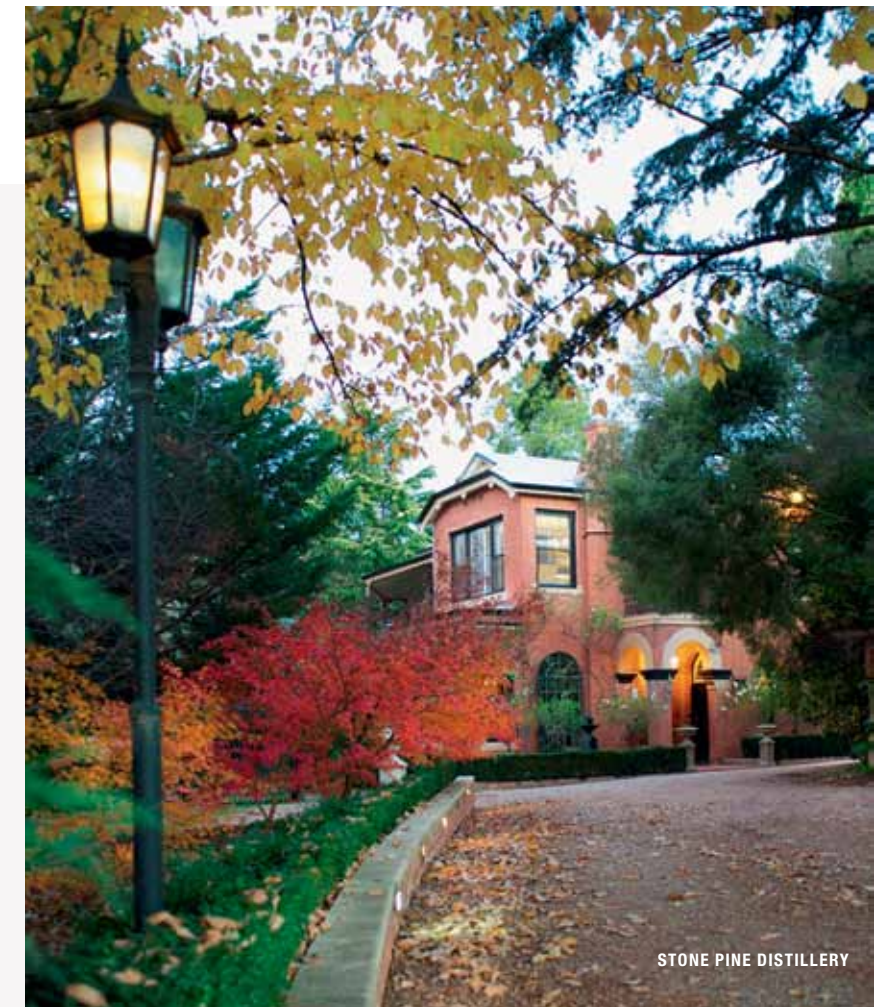


RISING SUN HOTEL

10

Waving a new banner
BATHURST NSW

Bathurst has long been a magnet for motorheads. But Australia's first inland city is now seducing long weekenders drawn to its dinky-sweet bars, hip cafés and industrial-cute eateries. Linger with locals over lemon tarts at the **Legall Patisserie & Café**, head to **The Hub** for a toasted sandwich with ham and onion jam or tuck into pizza in the pretty courtyard at **Church Bar**. A visit to the city's new cool quarter must include a cocktail at **Webb & Co** or a comfort-oriented dish such as kangaroo and pinot ragu at **Cobblestone Lane Restaurant**, housed in a lovingly restored former department store built in 1863. The **Stone Pine Distillery** is also worth a detour. Bunker down at **Bishop's Court Estate**. bishopscourtestate.com.au ■



STONE PINE DISTILLERY

8

A fresh taste
FROM CRADLE TO COAST IN NORTH-WEST TASMANIA

In Tasmania's north-west corner, few things escape the shadow of Cradle Mountain, but on this new trail through one of Australia's most fertile swathes of land, the iconic mountain is just a starting point. Stretching from Cradle Mountain to the Tarkine Wilderness, the **Cradle to Coast** driving route links a host of primary producers and restaurants. Duck into **Railton** to sample Willie Simpson's beers at **Seven Sheds Brewery**, and lunch on the wharf at Mathew Waller's **Pier01** in **Ulverstone**. Go paddock-to-plate among the free-range Wessex Saddleback pigs at **Mt Gnomon Farm** and finish the day watching the sun set over **Bass Strait** from Stanley's **Old Cable Station Restaurant**. cradletocoasttastingtrail.com.au



BISHOP'S COURT ESTATE

9

New 'musts'
MARGARET RIVER, WA

It might be a well-trodden food and wine region, but **Margaret River** constantly has something new to offer hungry visitors. Leading local chef Tony Howell, formerly of Cape Lodge is creating some superbly innovative dishes with an Asian twist at the impressive **Aravina Estate** complex, which has fast become a 'must-visit' destination. Newly re-named **Must**, formerly Must, is known for its superb steaks and pork provided by local farmer/vigneron David Hohnen, as well as a fine wine list, while recent arrival **Swings Taphouse & Kitchen** serves wines on tap (poured from transparent fonts – a world-first) and a tapas-style menu. Another much-vaunted newcomer is **Miki's Open Kitchen**, a tiny Japanese restaurant that has earned rave reviews. Stay in the centre of Margaret River in the very comfortable **The Trail** apartments, overlooking the main street. thetrail.com.au

A Destination with a difference

"Christmas Island is without doubt a unique and fascinating place."
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