

2017 HOT 50 RESTAURANTS

MONSTER Canberra

Hottest Restaurant ACT

While the dining scene in the nation's capital has improved markedly over the past decade, it's still almost impossible to get any meal, let alone a decent one, after 9pm. Monster, open from 6.30am to 1am in the oh-so-hip Hotel Hotel, is the answer for anything from breakfast or a bar snack to a seven-course chef's selection dinner. It's the modern, flexible dining space writ large. The beef tartare remains our favourite dish, summing up chef Sean McConnell's informal, inspired, modern take on classics: Boxgum Grazing beef comes with miso-cured egg yolk, avocado, horseradish and black rice crackers. It looks as exotically delicious as it tastes. Other menu stalwarts include fried tofu with pickled shiitake, bonito soy, spring onion oil and sesame, and a Middle Eastern-style lamb shoulder with pistachio, yoghurt and pomegranate and shards of vine leaf and brik pastry. Desserts maintain the standard and the wine list prioritises the Canberra District in a strong selection from Australia, plus curiosities from the likes of Greece and Georgia.

monsterkitchen.com.au

ATTICA Melbourne

● The hauntingly beautiful, bleakly confronting photograph of a bushfire-razed landscape in the first flush of recovery tells the story of Attica in 2017 in two words: regrowth and renewal. With a recent (and needed) refurbishment, Ben Shewry's internationally renowned restaurant has caught up with its worldwide accolades. It is every bit the physical manifestation of his cooking philosophy – local, natural, quirky, quietly luxurious. Sure, it still offers one of the most expensive and sometimes challenging dining experiences in Australia. Bookings are as hard to get as ever and there's still a hefty smattering of gastro-tourists getting their World's 50 Best Restaurants passport stamped.



But service, always well drilled, now comes with a cheeky wink that complements the indie soundtrack, and the wine list now has a greater focus on our own back yard. A stunning Port Phillip scallop, slivers of hot-smoked pork and a trio of tarts are just a few of the initial onslaught of bites – along with billy tea by the fire out back. In between, the focus on native foodstuffs has never been sharper. There might be sticky rich jumbuck and macadamia, marron and desert lime, and camel's milk ice cream sprinkled with ants, along with herbs and nuts and flowers you've never heard of. All before a knockout dessert of emu egg whipped into a sweet cloud. It's assured, less earnest and more fun. Attica, always unique, has never been better.

attica.com.au

WILSON & MARKET Melbourne

● Big flavours. Generosity, in every sense. Britpacker Paul Wilson has been in Australia 18 years now and every turn of the chef's career has produced new benchmarks of power, finesse and an ever-greater focus on small-scale artisan producers with whom to collaborate. The guy loves to feed people. Now, finally at the helm of his own multi-tasking cafe/enoteca/restaurant, he's giving it his best shot with food that reflects his British roots yet embraces the New World, specifically Asian and Latino flavours. Throw in the extensive use of wood and smoke and the results are sensational. It might be a raw tuna signature somehow melding Middle Eastern and Mexican ingredients that will floor you; or a Wilson twist on a classic whole-fish dish such as sole à la Grenobloise, adding fried school prawns to the classic caper/lemon sauce. Between, house-prepared everything, such as smoked ocean trout, or the guanciale paired with squid and radicchio "salad". Nothing on this menu fails, and the "wine wall" is a bargain. W&M will take some tweaking before it



● HALL OF FAME

● NEW ENTRY