



The seductively lit Il Baccaro

cheeses are lathered in burnt butter. Fresh burrata gets the backing of beetroot jelly. Cauliflower cooked in Sicilian red wine adds dimension to rich yet delicate duck leg. It's a lesson in Italian substance and style.

ICEBERGS DINING ROOM AND BAR

📍 1 Notts Avenue, Bondi Beach;
(02) 9365 9000
🌐 idrb.com
🕒 Open seven days for lunch and dinner

A visit to Sydney wouldn't be complete without a meal at the 'Bergs with its seasonal spin on contemporary Italian by chef Monty Koludrovic. It's as Aussie as spag bol, relying on masterful Italian technique and superb Australian produce. The floor-to-ceiling windows offer views of our most famous beach but inside, staff in white jackets and black bow ties help moderate a Mediterranean mood. Translucent eastern king prawns get a garlic, chilli and lemon kiss, while bone marrow and braised Coffin Bay octopus are combined with curls of cavatelli pasta. It's all as mesmerising as it is memorable.



VIC

OSTERIA LA PASSIONE

📍 486 Bridge Road, Richmond;
(03) 9428 2558
🌐 osterialapassione.com.au
🕒 Open Tuesday-Saturday for dinner

Molto Italiano. Osteria la Passione is about as close as you can get to the Emilia-Romagna region without paying the airfare. Chef Carmine Costantini is the real deal: a farmer-chef who bakes his own bread (smoked buckwheat and rye, delivered in a brown paper bag), cures his own meats (on display in the glass cabinet like religious icons) and makes everything from scratch, including fat pouches of tortellini with ricotta and borage, napped in butter sauce. Choose from an à la carte menu or a six- or nine-course dégustation, with selections that change according to the day and the season. Diners can expect the unexpected, such as cavatelli with prawns and zucchini vellute, finished with sun-dried mullet roe. Italy never felt so in reach. *Molto buono.*

IL BACCARO

📍 168-170 Little Collins Street, Melbourne; (03) 9654 6778
🌐 ilbacaro.com.au
🕒 Open Monday-Saturday for lunch and dinner

It's *amore*. The devoted diners making a beeline for this seductive bistro know there's substance to the warm lights twinkling between wooden venetians, the classic wainscoted good looks of the Latin power-eating hotspot with a wine list full to bursting with Old World loveliness. You'd do well to brace yourself for some bill shock, though prices become irrelevant when the parade of Italian classics begins arriving. Everyone seems to order the calamari, lightly floured and fried, on a thicket of rocket but from there it's anyone's game, whether it's the rich Gorgonzola funk accompanying fresh figs, the white anchovy and pink peppercorn zing to the Wagyu carpaccio or the dolce-time frenzy of fairy floss and pop rocks with steamed cheesecake and blueberry and violet-essence sorbet. As for the waiters... at Il Baccaro, being wooed is to be expected.

REVIEWS BY

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ROSETTA

📍 Riverside, Crown complex, 8 Whiteman Street, Southbank; (03) 8648 1999
🌐 rockpool.com
🕒 Open Tuesday-Sunday for lunch and seven days for dinner

Neil Perry doesn't do things by half-measures. Rosetta, which joined his steakhouse Rockpool Bar & Grill and the regional Chinese Spice Temple on the Crown riverfront three years ago, is cinemascope Italian: a fully realised vision of mid-century opulence complete with russet-coloured velvet banquettes, acres of marble and black-and-white portraits of Italian starlets and playboys. Italian in the classic sense (simple, unfussy and utterly produce-driven), pasta is the restaurant's long suit. Sophia Loren may well owe everything she has to tagliolini tangled into a garlicky mass and anointed with spanner crab or agnolotti stuffed with a delicately herby farce of veal, rabbit and pork. Roasted meats are another highlight: twice-cooked porchetta with preserved peaches, salsa verde and sanguinaccio (blood sausage). No funny business here; just sheer Italian delight.