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## EATING

### top picks

- Pier (Seafood, p151)
- Guillaume At Bennelong (Mod Oz, p140)
- Spice I Am (Thai, p145)
- Chu Bay (Vietnamese, p145)
- Billy Kwong (Chinese, p145)
- Toko (Japanese, p146)
- Zaafran (Indian, p141)
- Fifi's (Lebanese, p148)
- Lo Studio (Italian, p145)
- Bathers' Pavilion (French, p150)

Not content with proving itself world class in the swimming pool, on the cricket pitch and on the big screen, Australia has finally taken the competition to the kitchen. Good old-fashioned Aussie parochialism has turned chefs into celebrities to rival *Home and Away* starlets. Take Tesuya (Wakuda) and Bill (Granger); their eponymous restaurants have granted them a first-name recognition among Sydney sophisticates equal to Kylie, the great one-named diva herself.

The simple fact is that Sydney's cuisine now rivals that of any world city. While Melbourne has made much of its Mediterranean melting pot, Sydney more than any other Australian city has woken up and found itself on the Pacific Rim. It's in its food that White Australia is finally being laid to rest. Nowadays Cheryl and Darryl from Rooty Hill are just as likely to head out for Thai, Vietnamese or Lebanese as they are for fish and chips or a roast.

The country is blessed with excellent produce from its farms and its fisheries. A simple rule of thumb in Sydney: when in doubt, order the prawns – they're generally large and luscious. The tropical north provides pineapples, mangoes and even winter strawberries, while the cooler southern climate lends itself to fine wines and cheeses. These come together in a fresh, flavour-some, multicultural mix on dining tables throughout the harbour city.

Sydney is also blessed with enlightened licensing laws that allow you to bring your own (BYO) wine and sometimes beer to those restaurants that offer the choice. You'll usually be charged corkage (even if your bottle's got a screw cap) at either a per-person or per-bottle rate, but it's generally cheaper than choosing off the wine list – and at least you know what you're getting.

While Sydney's top restaurants are properly pricey, eating out needn't be expensive. There are plenty of ethnic eateries where you can grab a cheap and tasty pizza or a bowl of noodles. Judicious ordering can even land you a reasonably priced meal at some of Sydney's celebrity kitchens – try brunch at bills (p142) or share vegetarian dishes at Billy Kwong (p145).

Any taste can be catered to. You can greet the day with a heart-starting espresso and some ricotta hot cakes in Potts Point; chow down the freshest catch of the day at a waterfront restaurant in Darling Harbour; stave off afternoon hunger pangs with tapas in Glebe; gobble a pie with sauce at an evening footy game at Aussie Stadium; rise above it all with a glittering harbour view and the snazziest top-end cuisine on the North Shore; or spend the wee hours in a post-midnight supper at one of Chinatown's great-value eating dens.

## MOD OZ

At one point those making a case for a distinctly Australian cuisine would have pointed to pavlova, lamingtons and Anzac biscuits (risking pistols at dawn from the New Zealand Countrywomen's Institute) or 'bush tucker'. While eating the Coat of Arms (kangaroo and emu, with a crocodile starter) is a distinctly Australian experience and worth trying (kangaroo is quite tasty and has a gamey quality, reminiscent of venison), it doesn't a cuisine make.

At which point the country's most innovative chefs reverted to convict stereotypes; eyeing the surroundings carefully, they determined what to steal from their neighbours and wove it all into something better than the sum of its parts – something just right for the location and climate.

This mix of European traditions with exotic flavours is what is casually termed 'Mod Oz' (Modern Australian) cuisine – an

amalgamation of Mediterranean, Asian, Middle Eastern and Californian cooking practices that emphasise lightness, experimentation and healthy eating. It's a hybrid style, shaped by migrant influences, climatic conditions and local ingredients. It is essentially a culinary adventure built around local, seasonal produce that plays freely with imported ingredients, along with their accompanying

## top picks

### MOD OZ

- Guillaume At Bennelong (p140)
- Ripples (p150)
- Bentley Restaurant & Bar (p145)
- Café Sydney (p140)
- Quay (p140)

cooking techniques and traditions. In Sydney this magpie style has filtered down from sophisticated restaurants to modest corner bistros and pub grub.

## HISTORY & CULTURE

While the original convicts and marines came close to starvation in the early years of the settlement, the local Aboriginal tribes had millennia of experience in deriving sustenance from the land. You can see examples of the edible plants harvested by the Cadigal, Darug and D'harawal people in the *Cadi Jam Ora* (First Encounters) beds of the Royal Botanic Gardens (p57). The existence of huge middens in the city centre show that shellfish were a staple, and fish, birds, snakes and kangaroo provided further sources of protein.

The settlers aspired to the bland food of England – roast meat, pies and boiled vegetables. In lean times, the city's poor would fall back on rabbit. Eventually 'meat and three veg' dinners followed by tinned fruit and cream became the standard Australian home-cooked meal, with 'throwing some prawns on the bar-bee(-cue)' for the more adventurous.

Waves of immigrants brought their cuisine with them, starting with the Chinese in the 1850s. Mediterranean migrants (particularly Italians and, to a lesser extent, Greeks and southern Slavs) started to have an impact on local fare from the early 20th century, especially in the area around Kings Cross. They also started a love affair with coffee that has spread to every corner of the city.

In the latter half of the century, wars in Vietnam and Lebanon brought new waves of refugees and new ways of cooking – although it's only recently that these cuisines have crossed into the mainstream. In the 1980s and '90s the number of young Thai students burgeoned, firmly establishing one of Sydney's most popular ethnic cuisines.

It's no exaggeration to say that in Sydney today you could experience a different culture's cuisine every night for a month without doubling up. You'll find everything from Maltese to Nepalese within a few kilometres of the city centre.

## HOW SYDNEY PEOPLE EAT

Breakfast is a social event for many Sydneysiders. Many now prefer to conduct business over a café latte and a bowl of porridge instead of an upmarket power lunch or fine

## top picks

### ETHNIC EATING AREAS

- Thai King St, Newtown
- Vietnamese Chinatown; King St, Newtown; Cabramatta
- Chinese Chinatown; Chatswood
- Indian Cleveland St, Surry Hills
- Balkan Oxford St, Darlinghurst
- Italian Leichhardt; Haberfield; Stanley St, East Sydney
- Spanish Liverpool St, City

dinner, and friends often choose to start the day with scrambled eggs, gossip and giggling. The prime neighbourhoods for this are Potts Point, Surry Hills and Bronte, but it would be surprising not to find a respectable breakfast café in any part of Greater Sydney.

Breakfast time can start around 6am and extend to a late-morning brunch, although many cafés serve all-day breakfasts, especially on weekends. The all-day option is perfect for hardened party animals and is therefore more common in the inner east and west. If you're an early riser, a well-positioned breakfast table can prove an entertaining platform for watching the detritus of the night before, spilling out of Darlinghurst and Kings Cross clubs. Yum cha in Chinatown is a popular weekend brunch option.

It's in the coffee stakes that Sydney (and indeed most Australasian cities) wipes the floor with London and Los Angeles. You won't have to settle for wussy drip filters here – it's espresso all the way. The big international chains have sprouted up, but are generally considered by the city's hipsters to be the last refuge of the boring and unimaginative. Chose a local café and order a flat white (espresso with warm milk), café latte (similar but milkier, often served in a glass), cappuccino (espresso topped with frothed milk and chocolate or cinnamon), long or short black (espresso without milk and with varying amounts of water), *macchiato* (a short black with a tiny splash of milk) or *ristretto* (harder to find, but basically a very concentrated espresso currently fashionable due to Ian Thorpe). Most cafés now offer soy or 'skinny' milk.

For most working Sydneysiders, lunch means a quick sandwich or salad gobbled at

their desk or in a nearby park. Others head to shopping centre food halls (generally serving a selection of ethnically diverse bain-marie fare) – though there are many restaurants that provide an upmarket option. Chinatown sees large lunchtime crowds jamming its good-value eateries – it's a great place to go for a casual and delicious meal.

Dinner is more important on the social scale, but unless it's a special event, casual is usually the go. Jeans, tidy T-shirts and trainers are generally fine in all but the most exclusive joints. At Asian, Lebanese and Indian restaurants, sharing dishes is the norm – hogging your own is regarded as bad form, unless you're the only vegetarian.

At a European-style restaurant many Sydneysiders would stop at two courses, only going 'all the way' for a special occasion at a special place (or when work's paying). When it comes to the pointy end of the night there's usually a discussion as to whether to split the bill or pay for your own. Splitting is more common, but if you've knocked back the lobster and a bottle of Dom Perignon, you should insist on paying extra.

## VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

Sydney is not a difficult city for herbivores. Vegetarians should have no trouble finding satisfying choices on most menus – unless you wander into a steak house by mistake. Some of Sydney's leading restaurants offer separate vegetarian menus, which at Tetsuya's (p141) and the Bathers' Pavilion (p150) stretch to multiple course degustation.

At Asian eateries it pays to inquire as to whether the vegetable dishes are cooked with oyster or fish sauce. Usually they'll be happy to make soy-based substitutions. Many of the more established restaurants such as Thai Potong (p148) specifically mark strictly vegetarian options on the menu. Southeast Asian vegetarian dishes are usually a good option for vegans also, but once again it pays to check.

The more socially progressive suburbs, such as Newtown and Glebe, have the widest range of veggie options. Also worth noting is the cluster of mainly vegetarian South Indian restaurants on Cleveland St, Surry Hills, between Crown and Bourke Sts.

Catering specifically to vegans are the Iku Wholefoods chain ([www.iku.com.au](http://www.iku.com.au)), which has cafés throughout Sydney, and Pure Wholefoods (p151).

## COOKING COURSES

If food's your thing and you want to leave Sydney with more than some happily gained inches around your belt, several seminars enable you to expand your culinary repertoire while indulging in food and wine tastings or even full meals.

One of the city's leading providores Simon Johnson (p129) hosts the excellent 'Talk Eat Drink' series, featuring a two-hour class from a leading chef (\$90). They are usually held on Saturday mornings from 10.30am at the Pyrmont store (see [www.simonjohnson.com.au](http://www.simonjohnson.com.au)).

The Sydney Fish Market (p103) attracts 14,000 people per year to its regular 'Sydney Seafood School' sittings. Courses start from \$75 and run from 11am to 3pm on weekends and from 6.30pm to 8.30pm about three nights per week (see [www.sydneyfishmarket.com.au](http://www.sydneyfishmarket.com.au)). They, too, feature celebrity chefs and culminate in a food and wine tasting.

For a more Ocker experience, try the **Bar-Be School** (☎ 9460 2700; [www.bar-beschool.com.au](http://www.bar-beschool.com.au)). It offers a series of three sessions for a hefty \$250 (or single sessions for \$99), where you'll learn to barbecue meat, seafood or vegetable skewers. The 2½-hour classes are held from 11.30am or 3pm on Saturdays at either the Union Hotel, North Sydney or the Fairland Pavilion, Centennial Park – culminating in a full meal and wine tasting.

## PRACTICALITIES

### Opening Hours

Cafés and restaurants generally open seven days a week. If they do close, it's usually on a Sunday night or Monday. Cafés often serve food throughout the day from around 7am until 5pm, unless they offer a dinner menu. Restaurant serving hours are more rigid; noon to 3pm is a usual lunch sitting and 6pm to 9pm is typical for dinner. Only hours that differ substantially from these are mentioned in the reviews.

### How Much?

Eating in Sydney can be as thrifty as a \$4 foccacia or a \$7 Chinese noodle soup. At midrange restaurants you can expect to pay

## PRICE GUIDE

\$\$\$	mains over \$25
\$\$	mains \$12-25
\$	mains under \$12

between \$12 and \$25 for a main course. At the city's top restaurants you can easily be looking at \$30 to \$50 for a main course, and over \$100 for a degustation menu.

## Booking Tables

Most restaurants take reservations for both lunch and dinner. For the best restaurants it's safest to book at least a week ahead, although you can sometimes sneak in with less notice, particularly for a mid-week lunch. For some, such as Tetsuya's, months are required.

Luckily for tourists some of Sydney's top tables don't take bookings at all; if you're prepared to wait a couple of hours you'll snaffle a table. These restaurants often have a bar or arrangement with a nearby pub – put your name on the list and have a liquid appetiser.

## Tipping

Waiting staff at cafés and restaurants are paid a living wage, so tipping is not compulsory. If the service is up to snuff, it's common to tip around 10%, particularly at better restaurants. If anything gets your goat, you don't have to tip at all. At cafés where you order and pay at the counter, tipping is not expected but there's often a jar where customers can throw their change.

## Self-Catering

Sydney's two big supermarkets are Coles and Woolworths, with branches everywhere. Some are open 24 hours or until midnight. Every suburb worth its weight will have a decent delicatessen.

## THE ROCKS & CIRCULAR QUAY

If you feel like a splurge, this is the place to come. The charismatic back lanes of The Rocks are dotted with little eateries, from 24-hour pancake joints to white-linen palaces. Following the horseshoe around from the Harbour Bridge to the Opera House you'll find dozens

## HOOKING A BETTER CATCH

No wonder Sydney's restaurants feature seafood so prominently – the island nation's fishing zone is the third-largest in the world, comprising 133 different fisheries. These generate over two billion dollars annually, making it Australia's fourth-biggest income-earning industry. But what toll does the removal of 287,000 tonnes of fish and associated by-catch (dolphins, seals and other species snagged unintentionally) have on the oceans? Is this sustainable?

Anissa Lawrence is the CEO of Ocean Watch Australia, a body set up by the fishing industry to work towards sustainability. Some of its innovations to improve fishing methods are deceptively simple, such as hanging streamers from hook and line fisheries to deter sea birds from getting snagged. Others are more high-tech; Ocean Watch is working on a trawl net design to allow undersized fish to escape the haul. The body also works with coastal councils to install recycling bins for the disposal of leftover fishing line – reducing the likelihood of marine creatures becoming tangled.

So what can we do to make a difference? Australians consume an average of 16kg of seafood per person each year. However 75% of that is imported (such as canned fish), often from less well-regulated countries, while 75% of Australia's higher quality catch is exported. The remaining 25% is what's served up to you in restaurants.

Lawrence wants to see a grassroots momentum build from people asking at their supermarkets 'Is this fish sustainable?' She also suggests seeking out the Marine Stewardship Council logo – you'll currently find it on West Australian rock lobsters, John West salmon (but not its tuna), New Zealand Hoki, and Sealord and Bird's Eye products.

She agrees that line-caught fishing is generally better than trawling and suggests avoiding ordering shark and orange roughy – both are long lived, slow growing species that produce relatively few offspring.

The independent **Australian Marine Conservation Society** (☎ 07-3393 5811; [www.amcs.org.au](http://www.amcs.org.au)) goes further still with its handy pocket-sized *Australia's Sustainable Seafood Guide*. It splits commercial species into three categories – say no, think twice and better choice – depending on how they've been caught and reared. The society doesn't approve of sea-cage aquaculture.

Given that neither you nor your waiter are likely to know exactly how the fish made their way onto the menu, we've used their guide to put together the following rough suggestions on the very worst and best things to order:

Worst: Atlantic salmon, blue warhou, broadbill swordfish, commercial scallop, eastern gemfish (hake), ocean trout, orange roughy, oreos, rays, redfish (nannygai), shark (flake), silver trevally, snapper, southern bluefish tuna

Best: abalone, Australian salmon, blue swimmer crab, bream, calamari, crayfish, cuttlefish, flathead, leatherjacket, marron, mullet, mussels, octopus, oysters, squid, trevally (but not silver), western rock lobster, whiting, yabbies

of upmarket restaurants, all with glorious water views. It should come as no surprise that this most touristy of precincts is also the priciest. If at all possible, budget for at least one night where you can throw on your glad rags and let Sydney's showiness seduce you.

## THE ROCKS

**QUAY** Map p54 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9251 5600; upper level, Overseas Passenger Terminal; mains \$48-65; 🍴 lunch Tue-Fri, dinner daily; 🍷 Circular Quay

Quay is shamelessly guilty of breaking the rule that good views make for bad food. Peter Gilmore may be one of Sydney's younger celebrity chefs, but Quay's exquisite cuisine proves he's at the top of his game (doubters should try the crispy-skin Murray cod with shitake). And the view? Like dining in a postcard. Bookings are recommended.

## HARBOUR VIEW HOTEL

Map p54 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9252 4111; 18 Lower Fort St; mains \$22-29; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Circular Quay

Request a table with a view in the intimate upstairs dining room of this lovingly restored 1920s pub, nearly directly underneath the Harbour Bridge. An old-fashioned ambience (crisp white linen and antique crockery mounted on the walls) matches hearty but interesting meals, accompanied by complementary damper and consommé.

## GUMNUT TEAGARDEN

Map p54 Café \$\$

☎ 9247 9591; 28 Harrington St; mains \$8-17; 🍴 8am-5pm Sat-Tue, 8am-10pm Wed-Fri; 🍷 Circular Quay

Housed in the leafy backyard of a wonderfully preserved Rocks cottage (1829), the Gumnut serves good, old-fashioned nosh such as sandwiches, pies and ploughmen's platters. The antique theme carries through to tables fashioned from Singer sewing machine bases. Expect quality coffee and cakes Granny would be proud of. Chill out to live jazz on Friday nights and Sunday afternoons.

## EAST CIRCULAR QUAY

**ARIA** Map p54 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9252 2555; 1 Macquarie St; mains \$44-54; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner daily; 🍷 Circular Quay

Carrying on the operatic theme of its famous neighbour, Aria offers a winning

combination of artful dishes (the roasted duck breast with rhubarb *tarte tatin*, parsnip puree and black pepper sauce is music for the mouth), superb harbour views, an award-winning wine list and flawless service. Reservations essential.

## GUILLAUME AT BENNELONG

Map p54 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9241 1999; Sydney Opera House; mains \$38-50; 🍴 lunch Thu & Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Circular Quay

Located under the smallest of the Opera House's iconic sails, a meal at Guillaume won't fail to be a treasured Sydney memory. Award-winning chef Guillaume Brahimi's masterful style is evident in every divine dish. Just thinking about the rib-eye of Wagyu beef cooked on the bone (\$180 for two) is enough to induce palpitations (on two counts). Book well ahead.

**CAFÉ SYDNEY** Map p54 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9251 8683; Customs House, 31 Alfred St; mains \$28-39; 🍴 noon-11pm Mon-Fri, 5-11pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun; 🍷 Circular Quay

At Café Sydney you never know if your meal will come out of a saucepan, wok, tandoori oven or wood-fired grill, but you can always be sure that the views will come straight from heaven. Easing into the roasted barramundi with yabbies (\$39) on a lazy Sunday afternoon while live jazz plays is one of the more sublime Sydney experiences.

## TRAMEZZINI ESPRESSO

Map p54 Café \$

☎ 9232 0422; 50 Bridge St; mains \$4-7; 🍴 6.30am-5pm Mon-Fri; 🍷 Circular Quay

There aren't a lot of good places in the city for a reasonably priced healthy bite, so this Italian café in the foyer of the AMP building is worth remembering. Unsurprisingly the clientele is extremely suity, but don't let that and all the ostentatious marble get in the way of a delicious egg and parmesan breakfast roll.

## CITY CENTRE

The biggest names have tended to gravitate to the big end of town, where the big bucks are. Without harbour views, the city's central restaurants tend to be discreet upmarket spots, perfect for secret handshakes over million-dollar deals. Some have beaten geography by perching themselves up towers, while others stake out a sunny spot in the parks.

Expect a reverse gradation of prices, starting at the water and lightening considerably as you head inland. For a cheap lunch, make like an office worker – grab something at one of the numerous food halls and sandwich bars and head for Hyde Park. There's a tiny Spanish Quarter taking up a stretch of Liverpool St west of George St.

**TETSUYA'S** Map pp62-3 French-Japanese \$\$\$

☎ 9267 2900; www.tetsuyas.com; 529 Kent St; degustation \$185; 🍴 6-11pm Tue-Fri, noon-11pm Sat; 🍷 Town Hall

Tetsuya's has been ranked within the top five best restaurants in the *world* – come here with a palate that seeks a culinary journey rather than a simple stuffed belly. The degustation menu offers 10 courses of amazingly creative morsels of art (portions are small) and tastes that are pure, refined and exhilarating. It pays to book months in advance.

**EST** Map pp62-3 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9240 3010; Level 1, Establishment Hotel, 252 George St; mains \$48; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Wynyard

Legendary Sydney chef Peter Doyle and sommelier Franck Moreau keep the business crowds powering through deal-sealing corporate lunches at this slick eatery. Portions are small but high quality and the dining room more suited to groups than to intimate meals, but this classy place still exemplifies Sydney dining at its best. Thick wallet and fancy threads a must.

**BÉCASSE** Map pp62-3 French \$\$\$

☎ 9283 3440; 204 Clarence St; mains \$38-48; 🍴 lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Town Hall

As you enter through the heavy black velvet drapes you'll know you're somewhere special. The bling of crystal chandeliers brings Sydney sparkle into an elegant but austere dining room, currently ranked Sydney's best. Try the degustation menu (\$120): 10 courses of gustatory heaven, superbly created by chef Justin North and complemented by unsullied service. Book ahead and dress up.

**CASA ASTURIANA** Map pp62-3 Spanish \$\$

☎ 9264 1010; 77 Liverpool St; tapas \$9-15, mains \$23-29; 🍴 noon-10pm; 🍷 Town Hall

Tapas is flavour of the month in Sydney, but this atmospheric little eatery in Sydney's tiny Spanish Quarter predates the current trend. Try the delicious seafood, meat and vegetarian titbits and order a fine

Spanish wine, sangria or Asturian cider to wash it all down. If you're in the mood for a *cazuela* (baked fish fillet), paella or even weekend flamenco, you're in luck.

**BAR QUATTRO** Map pp62-3 Italian \$\$

☎ 9267 0299; St James Station, Hyde Park; mains \$12-25; 🍴 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat & Sun; 🍷 St James

As you sit admiring Hyde Park, you wouldn't think that less than a decade ago this pleasant sandstone café was one of Sydney's most notorious public toilets. The goings on are much more genteel these days – generally involving chatting, drinking coffee and choosing items off a traditional Italian menu. It's a lovely spot and the seafood pasta is delicious.

## DARLING HARBOUR & CHINATOWN

'See water, seafood' is the simple equation offered in Darling Harbour, and you'll find uninterrupted rows of restaurants lining the *Harbourside* (p74), *Cockle Bay* (p74) and *King St Wharf* (p74) developments. Most are pricey tourist-driven affairs that are generally good without being outstanding.

Chinatown is one of the city's best bets for a cheap, satisfying meal – especially after midnight. While Chinese rightly dominates, it also has excellent Vietnamese, Malaysian and Korean restaurants.

**ZAAFFRAN** Map p72 Indian \$\$\$

☎ 9211 8900; Level 2, 345 Harbourside, Darling Harbour; mains \$17-38; 🍴 lunch & dinner; MLR Convention

Indian food doesn't come fancier than this, with Chef Vikrant Kapoor (of Singapore's Raffles fame) whipping up an unfaultable assortment of both traditional dishes and his own creations. Case in point is the tempting dessert menu featuring Indian twists on European favourites. The Darling Harbour views spice things up even further.

**EMPEROR'S GARDEN BBQ & NOODLES** Map p72 Chinese \$\$

☎ 9281 9899; 213 Thomas St, Haymarket; dishes \$8-26; 🍴 9.30am-11pm; 🍷 Central

With barbecued ducks dangling in the window and bright lighting and basic furnishings inside, this is the real Chinatown deal. Try the

gow gee and the delicious softshell crab, or if you're more adventurous there's always the pig's blood jelly congee. Servings are large, so expect to share the pricier dishes.

## MARIGOLD RESTAURANT

Map p72 Chinese \$\$

☎ 9281 3388; Level 5, 683 George St, Haymarket; yum cha (4-5 serves) \$15-25, banquet \$30-60; ☎ 10am-3pm & 5.30-midnight; 📍 Central

This vast yum cha palace is a constant whirl of trolley dollies in silk dresses and waiters in bowties bustling around the 800 seats. It's hard to resist gorging as the Cantonese delights are presented for inspection – dim sum, dumplings, steamed pork buns, chickens' feet and all the other usual suspects. On weekends expect to queue.

## SUPER BOWL

Map p72 Chinese \$\$

☎ 9281 2462; 41 Dixon St, Haymarket; dishes \$7-24; ☎ 8am-2am; 📍 Central  
Take it as an extremely good sign that this is the place on Dixon St always crammed with Chinese diners. From the street-side tables you're well positioned to soak up the Chinatown vibe and slurp up a bowl of noodles. It's a good place for a post-midnight snack.

## XIC LO

Map p72 Vietnamese \$

☎ 9280 1678; 215A Thomas St, Haymarket; mains \$8-14; ☎ 11am-10.30pm; 📍 Central  
Serving up authentic favourites such as *pho bo* (beef rice-noodle soup) and rice paper rolls, this slick diner is a worthy crowd-pleaser. The food is excellent – fresh, tangy and as well-balanced as Vietnamese cuisine is supposed to be.

## JAIPUR SWEETS

Map p72 Indian \$

☎ 9280 1111; 188 Elizabeth St, Sydney; mains \$6-14; ☎ 10.30am-10.30pm; 📍 Museum  
While Jaipur has plenty of Indian desserts on offer, it dishes up excellent meals as well. Vegetarian options dominate, with plenty of thali and curry to choose from. You can't get better value than the \$6 'dhal of the day' – served with two roti, a small salad and spicy lime chutney.

## SEA BAY RESTAURANT

Map p72 Chinese \$

☎ 9267 4855; 372 Pitt St, Sydney; dishes \$10-13; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Museum  
Sea Bay has slipped the touristy tethers of Chinatown and drifted a few blocks north,

but the aesthetic is the same. Expect brightly lit, basic surroundings and simple, satisfying food. The shredded potato with chilli is a winner, as are the pancakes and dumplings.

## DARLINGHURST TO POTTS POINT

With the exception of the row of upmarket restaurants lining **Woolloomooloo Finger Wharf** (p80), this neighbourhood doesn't offer the razzle-dazzle of the harbour. What it has instead is a buzzy set of small spunky bistros and cafés with charisma. Charming Stanley St still has long-standing Italian survivors, now sharing space with sushi bars. Victoria St offers an eclectic mix of ethnic cuisines as it passes through Darlinghurst and Potts Point. Tiny Challis Ave houses the city's coolest micro-cafés.

## DARLINGHURST & EAST SYDNEY

BILLS Map p78 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9360 9631; 433 Liverpool St, Darlinghurst; breakfast \$5-18, mains \$19-30; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Sat, 8.30am-3pm Sun; 📍 Kings Cross  
Although it's now cloned throughout the Eastern Suburbs, the original bills still has the best vibe. The tucked-away location and large communal table lend a casualness not normally associated with celebrity chef establishments. Bill Granger is Mr Scrambled Egg, so dropping in for brunch is an affordable way of sampling the best bits of one of Sydney's iconic culinary talents.

## BAR REGGIO

Map p78 Italian \$\$

☎ 9332 1129; 135 Crown St, East Sydney; mains \$12-24; ☎ 10am-10.30pm Mon-Thu, 10am-11pm Fri & Sat; 📍 Museum  
While most of East Sydney's celebrated Italian restaurants have closed or gone up-market, Bar Reggio has kept its old-school atmosphere. Try for a seat in the courtyard lined with travel brochure murals and dig in to a traditional pizza, pasta or grill. For a cheap, satisfying lunch try a half (\$4) or full (\$6 to \$7) foccacia.

## DON DON

Map p78 Japanese \$

☎ 9331 3544; 80 Oxford St, Darlinghurst; mains \$9-14; ☎ 11.30am-10.30pm Tue-Sat; 📍 Museum  
We've worked our way backwards and forwards through the handy photo menu

for years and have only had consistently delicious dishes at this tiny Oxford St eatery. Expect everything from chicken *katsu-don* to sashimi, with most meals served with rice, miso and Japanese pickles on the side. It's a popular spot, so be prepared to wait.

## TEN BUCK ALLEY

Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9356 3000; 1/185 Bourke St, Darlinghurst; mains \$5-14; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri; 📍 Kings Cross  
The name pays homage to the back laneway, once a notorious hangout for laneway sexual prostitutes. The cheeky chappies at this tiny café continue the alley's bang-for-your-buck tradition, only with delicious food and even better coffee.

## BAR COLUZZI

Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9380 5420; 322 Victoria St, Darlinghurst; counter food \$5-10; ☎ 5am-7pm; 📍 Kings Cross  
One of Sydney's legendary cafés, Coluzzi's been here since 1957 and still attracts an odd-ball mix of older Italian gentlemen, judges, shady Kings Cross 'characters', Darlinghurst gay guys, bohemians and suits. Chose from the tasty selection of bagels, foccacia and pastries available at the counter and grab a table on the street.

## WOOLLOOMOOLOO

TOBY'S ESTATE Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9358 1196; 129 Cathedral St, Woolloomooloo; counter food \$4-9; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun; 📍 St James, 📍 311

While coffee is undoubtedly the main attraction at this tucked away roasters, it's a great place to drop in for a fresh baguette, toasted sandwich, nori roll or cake. As for the brown gold – it's strong, perfectly brewed and usually fair trade.

## HARRY'S CAFÉ DE WHEELS

Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9347 3074; Cowper Wharf Rdwy, Woolloomooloo; pies \$3-4; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Wed, 9am-3am Thu, 9am-4am Fri & Sat, 9am-midnight Sun; 📍 311

Ok, so it's just a pie cart – but it has been here since 1938 and at 3am after a night on the turps you'll rate it higher than Tetsuya's. Try a Tiger – a pie with mushy peas, potato and gravy on top. Just watch out for the scavenging seagulls (during the day) and rats the size of cats (at night).

## KINGS CROSS & POTTS POINT

FRATELLI PARADISO Map p78 Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9357 1744; 12 Challis Ave, Potts Point; mains \$20-33; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 7am-6pm Sat & Sun; 📍 311

An ever-changing and always interesting menu keeps the locals returning to this small, stylish eatery. Portions aren't large, allowing plenty of room for multiple courses. If you're not a regular the service can be cool, but the food is well worth the wait and the people-watching often excellent.

## JIMMY LIK'S

Map p78 Southeast Asian \$\$\$

☎ 8354 1400; 188 Victoria St, Potts Point; mains \$16-32; ☎ 6-11pm; 📍 Kings Cross

This chic eatery offers a menu inspired by Southeast Asian street food, served on a long communal table. The flavours are bold, balanced and invariably delicious. There's usually a wait for restaurant seating – an opportunity to enjoy the bar snacks and adventurous cocktails.

## DOV @ DELECTICA

Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9368 0600; 130 Victoria St, Potts Point; mains \$17-24; ☎ 7.30am-3pm Sun-Tue, 7.30am-10pm Wed-Sat; 📍 Kings Cross

Opening onto the nicest part of leafy Victoria St, Dov has a vibe that will tempt you to linger all morning over your newspaper and coffee. The menu varies throughout the day, starting with reasonably priced brekkie (\$5 to \$14) and lunch (check out the savoury tart of the day) before culminating in substantial evening meals from the ever-changing blackboard menu.

## LA BUVETTE

Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9358 5113; 35 Challis Ave, Potts Point; mains \$11-17; ☎ 6am-9pm Sun-Thu, 6am-5.30pm Fri & Sat; 📍 311

Like its sister Spring next door, La Buvette is absolutely teeny. That doesn't stop it being crammed with the beautiful, the famous and the guppies (gay urban professionals in the latest designer sunglasses). The menu features salads, sandwiches and crepes, but our favourite is the baked eggs with chorizo. Excellent coffee.

## SPRING ESPRESSO

Map p78 Café \$

☎ 9331 0190; 35 Challis Ave, Potts Point; mains \$12-16; ☎ 6am-5pm; 📍 311  
It's hard to differentiate this place from La Buvette (same size, clientele, standard –

similar menu) and even more difficult before the first coffee of the day, so just grab whichever has the first table available. Spring's salmon breakfast hits the spot every time.

### DOLCETTA Map p78 Italian \$\$

☎ 9326 9899; 165 Victoria St, Potts Point; mains \$10-16; ☎ 6am-10pm Mon-Fri, 6am-3pm Sat & Sun; 🍷 Kings Cross

Perhaps it's because it doubles as a *provvidore* that this friendly little neighbourhood eatery can offer beautiful meals at such reasonable prices. Where else in Sydney can you find fresh, zingy blue swimmer crab pasta with garlic and lemon zest for \$12.50? Try the truffled scrambled eggs for breakfast.

### ULIVETO Map p78 Café \$\$

☎ 9357 7331; 33 Bayswater Rd, Kings Cross; mains \$10-15; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Sat & Sun; 🍷 Kings Cross

Great coffee and muffins are the staples of this chilled-out café, set in a tree-lined plaza. The people-watching's not bad either.

## PADDINGTON TO DOUBLE BAY

In this conservative stretch restaurants offer good eating that shies away from the aggressively modern tendencies of its neighbours. Here's where you'll find an appreciation of the just-so steak with the perfect wine, and subdued, well-mannered service to match.

### PADDINGTON

#### VAMPS Map pp84-5 French \$\$\$

☎ 9331 1032; 227 Glenmore Rd, Paddington; mains \$12-28; ☎ 6.30-10.30pm Tue-Fri, 9am-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm Sat, 9am-2pm Sun; 🍷 389

This romantic little old-style French restaurant serves classics such as duck à l'orange and *crêpe Suzette* in the evenings. However, it's the weekend Breakfast Club that keeps us coming back. After a hard night out grab a seat in the pretty courtyard, order lots of coffee and a hearty breakfast (\$4 to \$13) and vamp it up with the waiters.

#### SLOANES Map pp84-5 Café \$\$\$

☎ 9331 6717; 312 Oxford St, Paddington; mains \$10-15; ☎ 6.15am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 7am-5.30pm Sun; 🍷 380

Don't be put off by the tiny interior, head down the back where there's a sweet courtyard surrounded by mature trees. The breakfast and coffee are great, and the lunch blackboard is always crammed with fancy pies, salads, wraps and soups. This is the place where former jailbird Paris Hilton famously, like, totally wandered off without paying her bill. Like, shut up!

#### RELISH ON REGENT Map pp84-5 Deli \$

☎ 9380 8699; 55 Regent St, Paddington; sandwiches \$7-9; ☎ 7.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat & Sun; 🍷 380

This little deli in the backstreets of Paddington has a large communal table and sunny window seats. Chose from the enticing salads, filo pastries and frittatas at the counter or direct the construction of your own sandwich from the fresh ingredients. This is a great place to assemble a picnic on the way to Centennial Park or the beaches.

#### CHOCOLATE BY THE BALD MAN MAX BRENNER Map pp84-5 Café \$

☎ 9357 5055; 437 Oxford St, Paddington; sweets \$3.50-5; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri & Sat, 10am-10.30pm Sun; 🍷 380

The crazy bald guy has taken a leaf from Willy Wonka's book. Shiny copper pipes lead to big vats of liquid heaven, while shelves bulge with all sorts of tempting treats to take away. Try the warm chocolate fondue for two, served with fruit, banana bread and marshmallows (\$16), or just sneak in for a coffee and brownie.

### WOOLLAHRA

#### BISTRO MONCUR Map pp84-5 French \$\$\$

☎ 9363 2519; Woollahra Hotel, 116 Queen St, Woollahra; mains \$28-40; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner daily; 🍷 389

With a striking monochromatic mural running the length of one wall and highly regarded chef Damien Pignolet creating marvels in the kitchen, Bistro Moncur has long been a favourite. The menu changes seasonally, but signature dishes such as the French onion soufflé gratin and grilled sirloin *Café de Paris* delight diners all year round. The service is impeccable.

#### JONES THE GROCER Map pp84-5 Deli \$\$\$

☎ 9362 1222; 68 Moncur St, Woollahra; mains \$10-14; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun; 🍷 389

Jones has a reputation as one of Sydney's finest *providores* – stocking wonderful cheese, chutneys and *charcuterie*. Grab a seat at the communal table for a tasty deli-fresh roll or pasta.

## SURRY HILLS TO ALEXANDRIA

Surry Hills' transformation into Sydney's cuisine mecca has been shockingly sudden – roughly coinciding with the 1999 opening of the Eastern Distributor, which made peaceful tree-lined backstreets out of Crown and Bourke Sts (once the main link between the airport and the bridge). In the 2007 *Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide*, Surry Hills restaurants nabbed half of the main awards. Even more surprising is the birth of Danks St in rough-edged Waterloo as a new gourmet strip. For a delicious cheap vegetarian meal, try the row of Indian eateries on Cleveland St, between Crown and Bourke.

### SURRY HILLS

#### BILLY KWONG Map pp90-1 Chinese \$\$\$

☎ 9332 3300; 355 Crown St, Surry Hills; mains \$20-42; ☎ dinner; 🍷 301-3

There's something wonderfully egalitarian about top restaurants where queuing's required – perfect for travellers who don't have the luxury of booking weeks ahead. Chef Kylie Kwong serves up a tempting seasonal menu made from the best organic, sustainable, fair-trade ingredients available.

#### LONGRAIN Map pp90-1 Thai \$\$\$

☎ 9280 2888; 85 Commonwealth St, Surry Hills; mains \$28-39; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Central

Set in a large warehouse conversion with long communal tables, Longrain pushes the boundaries of modern Thai cuisine. Try the caramelised pork hock with chilli vinegar and the eggnet – a large ball of prawns, sprouts and coriander yumminess encased in an egg lattice.

#### BENTLEY RESTAURANT & BAR

Map pp90-1 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9332 2344; 320 Crown St, Surry Hills; mains \$29-34; ☎ noon-1am Tue-Sat; 🍷 Museum

The reincarnation of this old corner pub as an upmarket restaurant hasn't thrown the bar out with the bathwater. The mains are an artful take on English pub fare (roast chicken

and duck, slow cooked pork loin, pan-roasted jewfish), while imaginative tapas (\$4 to \$12) takes the place of bar snacks. Add to the mix faultless service and an extensive wine list.

#### LO STUDIO Map pp90-1 Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9212 4118; 55 Brisbane St, Surry Hills; mains \$24-34; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Central

The sexy Deco curves of the Paramount Pictures office add glamour to this newcomer to the Surry Hills scene. The modern Italian menu covers a wide base of meat, seafood and vegetarian dishes and is unafraid to be adventurous.

#### BISTRODE Map pp90-1 French \$\$\$

☎ 9380 7333; 478 Bourke St, Surry Hills; mains \$27-33; ☎ lunch Fri, dinner Tue-Sat; 🍷 301-3

A celebration of all things meaty and fishy, the Bistrot menu will be challenging for some. The lily sure isn't gilded in the descriptions – it's more likely dipped in offal or served in the warm pig's head salad with pickled egg dressing. The food is exceptional – hearty yet intricate with plenty of unusual twists.

#### SPICE I AM Map pp90-1 Thai \$\$

☎ 9280 0928; 90 Wentworth Ave, Surry Hills; mains \$8-26; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun; 🍷 Central

In Sydney parlance this is definitely 'a thing right now'. Once the preserve of local Thais wanting an authentic taste of home, it now has queues out the door. No wonder, as everything we've tried from the over-70 reasonably priced dishes on the menu is wonderful – fragrant and spicy. Expect to be hurried out as soon as you're finished.

#### BODEGA Map pp90-1 Spanish \$\$\$

☎ 9212 7766; 216 Commonwealth St, Surry Hills; tapas \$6-26; ☎ lunch Thu & Fri, dinner Mon-Sat; 🍷 Central

The coolest progeny of the current tapas frenzy, Bodega has a casual vibe, impossibly handsome staff and a very funky matador mural. The dishes vary widely in size and price, with a substantial serve of ocean trout at the upper end. Wash them down with a tippie from the wide range of Hispanic wine, sherry, port and beer.

#### CHU BAY Map pp90-1 Vietnamese \$\$\$

☎ 9331 3386; 312A Bourke St, Surry Hills; mains \$12-25; ☎ dinner; 🍷 380

It's a little sad to be blowing the cover of this local hideaway, but this wonderful

family-run eatery is one of our very favourites. This is an authentically Vietnamese establishment – the pink walls and moving waterfall ‘paintings’ prove it. The food is always fresh and flavoursome and the service welcoming.

### PRASIT'S NORTHSIDE THAI

**TAKEAWAY** Map pp90–1 Thai \$\$

☎ 9332 1792; 395 Crown St, Surry Hills; mains \$12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 301-3  
There are only a handful of tables upstairs at this popular plum-painted eatery, so put your name on the list and grab a drink nearby. The menu covers a wide range of Thai specialities; look for the sublime Moreton Bay Bug in curry sauce in the specials.

### MOHR FISH

Map pp90–1 Seafood \$\$

☎ 9318 1326; 202 Devonshire St, Surry Hills; mains \$10-20; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm; ☎ Central  
Don't expect to find yourself in a fancy eatery when you come to Mohr Fish – this small but popular place takes up a space that's about the size of your living room. It has a very casual atmosphere and only a short, simple menu of excellent seafood – think fancy fish and chips.

### TOKO

Map pp90–1 Japanese \$\$

☎ 9357 6100; 490 Crown St, Surry Hills; dishes \$7-18; ☎ lunch Thu-Sat, dinner Mon-Sat; ☎ 301-3  
A new concept for Sydney, Toko dishes up delicious modern Japanese tapas – such as a superb soft shell crab (\$16) and eggplant with miso (\$9). Expect to spend upwards of \$30 a meal, more if you're a sashimi junkie (about \$6 for two pieces). Check out the brilliant lighting feature made of chopsticks in the so-cool-it-hurts cocktail bar.

### LUMIÈRE

Map pp90–1 Café \$\$

☎ 9331 6184; 425 Bourke St, Surry Hills; mains \$9-15; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4.30pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 380  
It's a sheer delight to sit in the bakery section of this café and watch all manner of gorgeous things being readied for the ovens. For brunch you can't go past the ricotta hot cakes with sour cherries, honeycomb and mascarpone.

### TWO GOOD EGGS

Map pp90–1 Café \$\$

☎ 9283 9694; 2/148 Goulburn St, Surry Hills; mains \$9-15; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat; ☎ Central  
We love the egg-shaped lighting fixtures and industrial feel of this corner café on the

lower slopes of Surry Hills. It's a great spot for a weekday breakfast, killer coffee and, yes, eggs dominate.

### MAYA TANDOORI

Map pp90–1 Indian \$

☎ 8394 9799; 472 Cleveland St, Surry Hills; mains \$8-11; ☎ 10am-10.30pm; ☎ 372  
On a strip of mainly vegetarian Indian restaurants, Maya Tandoori is proof that the prettiest is not always the best. Don't be put off by the bright lights, nasty furniture and general lack of ambience. The food's authentic, spice-tastic and one hell of a bargain (\$13 for four curries, raita, pickles, rice, two roti and dessert).

### MALIBU

Map pp90–1 Café \$

☎ 9280 2233; 62 Foster St, Surry Hills; mains \$4-10; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri; ☎ Central  
It's not often that a simple sandwich shop gets foodies excited, but this tiny hole-in-the-wall is an exception. The sandwiches are absolutely massive and the ingredients fresh and first-rate.

### SINGLE ORIGIN ROASTERS

Map pp90–1 Café \$

☎ 9211 0665; 60-64 Reservoir St, Surry Hills; mains \$4-9; ☎ 7am-3pm Mon-Fri; ☎ Central  
It's hard to imagine a more passionate bunch of caffeine junkies than this crew – they practically bounce off the walls in their enthusiasm, happy to chat about the fair trade or environmental credentials of their various beans. The food's simple but delicious, including a great bircher muesli.

### BOURKE STREET BAKERY

Map pp90–1 Café \$

☎ 9669 1011; 633 Bourke St, Surry Hills; mains \$3-7; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat; ☎ 301-303  
Foodies go nuts about this little place, and quite right, too. The fresh baking is impeccable, particularly the sourdough bread. Grab a seat and a coffee and pick from the alluring array of pizza slices, pies, tarts and pastries.

### WATERLOO & ALEXANDRIA

**DANKS STREET DEPOT**

Map pp90–1 Café \$\$\$

☎ 9698 2201; 1/2 Danks St, Waterloo; breakfast \$5-18, dinner \$25-28; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon, 7.30am-11pm Tue-Fri, 8am-11pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun; ☎ 301-303

Upon its opening this industrial-chic café quickly become a brunch-time gourmet favourite, with the creamed eggs with roasted mushrooms and truffle oil (\$17.50) assuming near legendary status.

### WAHWAH LOUNGE

Map pp90–1 Café \$\$

☎ 9699 3456; 2/1 Danks St, Waterloo; mains \$11-21; ☎ 7am-4pm Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun; ☎ 301-303  
With its über-modern interior, friendly staff and great name, this is a dependable spot for a first-rate cooked breakfast or lunch, a healthy sandwich or a daytime wine tittle.

### PARK CAFÉ

Map pp90–1 Café \$\$

☎ 9690 0393; 11 Power Ave, Alexandria; mains \$11-20; ☎ 7am-3pm; ☎ 309-310  
Tucked away in a surprisingly leafy pocket of Alexandria with the factory outlets only a block away, Park Café is a great spot to refuel during a shopping frenzy or to celebrate your bargains with a glass of wine on the sunny terrace. The food's fresh and fabulous with a distinctly Mediterranean feel and the coffee's excellent.

### SOPRA

Map pp90–1 Italian \$\$

☎ 1300 552 119; 7 Danks St, Waterloo; mains \$15-18; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat; ☎ 301-303  
Gastronomes in the know pour into this place, tucked away above one of the city's best gourmet providers. The menu's very seasonal, using the best of the fresh and imported produce on offer downstairs. On Fridays the huge *fritto misto di pesce* (seafood) platter is a highlight.

## BONDI TO COOGEE

Sydney's eastern beaches restaurants are an eclectic mix. Bondi offers everything from chin-up, tits-out glamour to funky surfie cafés. Bronte Rd is unbeatable for brunch – particularly when you can spot migrating whales over your cappuccino. For the Ritz of food halls, check out **Westfield Bondi Junction** (p132) – or stock up with stuff for cooking on the coast's well-maintained coin-operated beachside barbecues. If that sounds like too much hassle, you can always snaffle fish and chips on the sand.

## BONDI

**ICEBERGS** Map pp94–5 Italian \$\$\$

☎ 9365 9000; 1 Notts Ave, Bondi; mains \$38-46; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun; ☎ 380

Maurice Terzini's sleek celebrity magnet absolutely sizzles at its supreme cliff-top locale. His food is to Italian what Mod Oz is to meat and two veg; the upmarket menu is laced with unusual delights. Reservations definitely required.

### POMPEI'S

Map pp94–5 Italian \$\$

☎ 9365 1233; 126 Roscoe St, Bondi; mains \$17-20; ☎ 3-11pm Tue-Thu, 11am-11pm Fri-Sun; ☎ 380  
While the pizza here is good, it's the northern Italian dishes whipped up by expat George Pompei that are really special. Try the delicious handmade ravioli stuffed with spinach, ricotta and nutmeg, but be sure to leave room for the flavoursome sorbets and gelati.

### SABBABA

Map pp94–5 Israeli \$

☎ 9365 7500; 82 Hall St, Bondi; mains \$7-16; ☎ 11am-10pm; ☎ 389  
Despite being situated in a block catering mainly to Bondi's Hassidic Jewish community, this Israeli falafel shop attracts more punters in board shorts than black coats (it's not strictly kosher). The vegetarian falafels in pita bread (\$7) are a tasty bargain, or if that sounds too healthy, try a meat grill (\$16).

### GREEN'S CAFÉ

Map pp94–5 Café \$\$

☎ 9130 6181; 140 Glenayr Ave, Bondi; mains \$10-15; ☎ 8am-4pm Wed-Sun; ☎ 389  
This institution-green neighbourhood café has a 1950s nana-chic aesthetic and is prone to doing oddball things like hosting tea towel and apron exhibitions. Devonshire teas are served, but the menu is contemporary café fare, with excellent all-day breakfasts (try the delicious parmesan scrambled eggs).

### KATIPO COFFEE HOUSE DELUXE

Map pp94–5 Café \$

☎ 9387 7399; 101 Bondi Rd, Bondi; mains \$5-15; ☎ 6am-9.30pm Mon & Tue, 6am-10pm Wed-Sat, 8am-10pm Sun; ☎ 380  
Named after New Zealand's only poisonous spider this unassuming café offers a little extra bite in everything it does. Even the tap water is subtly flavoured with fresh fruit and delivered with a smile. For breakfast try the Nouveau Hippy Vego Feast – a banquet of eggs, herb-roasted tomato, garlic mushrooms, kumera and wilted greens.

**JED'S FOODSTORE** Map pp94–5 Café \$  
☎ 9365 0022; 60 Warners Ave, Bondi; mains \$5-14;  
🕒 6.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 6.30am-4.40pm Sat &  
Sun; 🚗 389

With a skateboard and a single trainer hanging from the roof, this sunny corner café is the epitome of slacker cool. Breakfast treats include a delicious quesadilla and the popular breakfast bowl (mountains of berries, muesli and yoghurt). Toasted sambos (sandwiches to the uninitiated) go by the names of Rock Hudson and Errol Flynn (a hammier version).

## BRONTE

**SWELL** Map pp94–5 Mod Oz \$\$\$  
☎ 9386 5001; 465 Bronte Rd, Bronte; mains \$28-32; 🕒 7am-10pm; 🚗 378

Swell is an apt name for the swankiest place on the Bronte strip. Expect a skillful blend of European and Asian flavours, with simpler meals available at lunch (from \$16) and a popular breakfast menu (from \$7).

**CAFFE SALINA** Map pp94–5 Café \$\$  
☎ 9369 4012; 479 Bronte Rd, Bronte; mains \$17-22; 🕒 7am-5pm Sun-Tue, 7am-9pm Wed-Sat; 🚗 378

Friendly Salina's is on to a winner with its long brunches and hangover specials (bacon, egg, steak, roast tomatoes, chips and a glass of iced Berocca). Who doesn't want hearty food, great coffee and soothing seaside when you're feeling poorly? Delicious, healthy picnic baskets to enjoy across the road at Bronte Beach can be ordered.

## COOGEE

**CHURRASCO** Map pp94–5 Brazilian \$\$\$  
☎ 9665 6535; 240 Coogee Bay Rd, Coogee; skewers \$30; 🕒 dinner; 🚗 372-374

At this swanky Brazilian barbecue, illuminated by a strange mix of trendy hanging globes and chandeliers, black-clad waiting staff proffer wave upon wave of South American-spiced chorizo, chicken and tender steak skewers. Share a salad (\$11) to avoid meat overload. The vegetarian version (at the same price, which hardly seems fair) swaps in vegetables and haloumi.

**CHISH N FIPS** Map pp94–5 Seafood \$  
☎ 9664 7100; Coogee Beach; mains \$6-12;  
🕒 5.30am-9pm weather dependent; 🚗 372-374

Oh the sheer Ockeriness of it all – quality fish and chips on a golden-sand beach! This well-placed snack bar also has great fish burgers and, for those seeking a healthier alternative, plentiful salads.

## INNER WEST

The tastes differ across these inner-city suburbs. Newtown's King St is undoubtedly one of the city's best eat streets. It has a staggering number of Thai restaurants, the Vietnamese have colonised the blocks south of Missenden Rd, and you'll also find African, Macedonian, Lebanese and Mexican scattered around. Glebe has a good selection of reasonably priced cafés, while things are a little more upmarket on Balmain's Darling St. Italian is the tradition in Leichhardt and Haberfield – the restaurants lining the piazza in Norton St's [Italian Forum](#) (p104) are great fun for families.

## NEWTOWN & ERSKINEVILLE

**THAI POTHONG** Map pp100–1 Thai \$\$  
☎ 9550 6277; 294 King St, Newtown; mains \$14-28; 🕒 lunch Tue-Sun, dinner daily; 📍 Newtown  
The ever popular Thai Pothong is gradually taking over King St. It's now at least four times bigger than its original size, yet the food is just as impressive and the service as attentive. All of the prawn dishes are sublime.

**FIFI'S** Map pp100–1 Lebanese \$\$  
☎ 9550 4665; 158 Enmore Rd, Enmore; mains \$12-25; 🕒 dinner Tue-Sun; 📍 Newtown

Chef Fifi Fudda brought the secret of her deliciously smoky *baba ganouge* dip with her from Beirut. Her restaurant gives Lebanese cuisine the respect it deserves, with white linen and classy décor. Opt for either a three-course omnivore or vegetarian banquet (\$30) or supersize to five courses (\$39).

**VARGA BAR ESPRESSO** Map pp100–1 Café \$  
☎ 9517 1932; 10 Wilson St, Newtown; mains \$8-14; 🕒 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5.30pm Sat & Sun; 📍 Newtown

This cute little dark pink café with an electric blue coffee machine is a great place to sit and watch Newtown's black parade. It's a mission to choose from the tantalising brunch options but the breakfast burrito usually wins out.

**Café Sofia** Map pp100–1 Café \$  
☎ 9519 1565; 7 Swanson St, Erskineville; mains \$5-14; 🕒 6.30am-5pm Mon & Tue, 6.30am-9pm Wed-Fri, 7am-9pm Sat, 8am-4pm Sun; 📍 Erskineville  
In the heart of Erskineville village, Café Sofia's sunny back courtyard is a popular spot to enjoy an all-day breakfast and great coffee. The salmon muffin with poached eggs and salad is a steal at \$5.50, and the friand and cake selection is always fresh and luscious. Greek mezze is served after 6pm.

**KILIMANJARO** Map pp100–1 African \$  
☎ 9557 4565; 280 King St, Newtown; mains \$10-13; 🕒 noon-10pm Sun-Thu, noon-11pm Fri & Sat; 📍 Newtown

With a giant map of Africa on the side of the building, bright yellow walls and staff in colourful robes, you won't mistake Kilimanjaro. The owners are Senegalese but the menu is sourced from all over the continent, including a delicious North African tagine. Try the *ssossou-gorgiguan* ('homosexual' in Wolof, apparently) – tuna steamed with spices. How very Newtown.

**GUZMAN Y GOMEZ TAQUERIA** Mexican \$  
Map pp100–1  
☎ 9517 1533; 175 King St, Newtown; mains \$8-10; 🕒 noon-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-9pm Sun; 📍 Newtown

Delivering a healthy and delicious alternative to fast food, this clean and modern diner uses fresh local produce to prepare authentic Mexican tacos, burritos and quesadillas. Everything's marinated and grilled daily, with only the *baja*-style fish cooked in oil.

## GLEBE & PYRMONT

**ALMUSTAFA** Map pp100–1 Lebanese \$\$  
☎ 9660 9006; 23 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe; mains \$10-28; 🕒 5.30-10.30pm Sun-Thu, 5.30-11.30pm Fri & Sat; 🚗 431-434

With belly dancers on the weekends and water pipes for afters, Almustafa is a fun place to eat – which wouldn't matter if the food wasn't first rate. Try not to fill up on the more-ish *hummus* and *baba ghanouj* dips; save room for stuffed vine leaves, sizzling lamb *kofta*, chicken *shwarma* and the other greatest hits of Lebanese cuisine.

**FIDEL'S BAR** Map pp100–1 Mexican \$\$  
☎ 9692 0973; 4/45 Harris St, Pyrmont; mains \$10-22; 🕒 5-10pm Tue-Thu & Sun, 5-11pm Fri & Sat; MLR John St Sq

Housed under an inconspicuous apartment block, there's nothing unassuming about Fidel's. Photos of Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa adorn the walls, fiesta fajitas come sizzling out on hot plates and the enigmatic owners ensure the tequila flows freely.

**DIGI.KAF** Map pp100–1 Café \$\$  
☎ 9660 3509; 174 St Johns Rd, Glebe; mains \$6-19; 🕒 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun; 🚗 432-434

It's great to find an internet café that hasn't neglected the café bit. This one promises 'coffee, cake and cyberspace' and delivers much more than that, including a cracking brunch. There's a tiny side lane for alfresco dining and nary a gaming nerd to be seen.

**FAIR TRADE COFFEE COMPANY** Café \$  
Map pp100–1  
☎ 9660 0621; 33 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe; mains \$5-15; 🕒 6.30am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-10pm Sat & Sun; 🚗 431-434

Unashamedly hippie and slightly grungy, this is great spot for guilt-free coffee and a community atmosphere. The food raids a number of cuisines, from a Mediterranean platter to Colombian *arepas* and Moroccan meatballs. Serves are tasty and substantial.

**YUGA** Map pp100–1 Café \$  
☎ 9692 8604; 172 St Johns Rd, Glebe; mains \$7-12; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun; 🚗 432-434

This is an odd combination – not just florist and café, but stylish and reasonably priced, fancy and friendly. Set in a beautiful old house with tables on the terrace, Yuga offers healthy Western-style breakfasts morphing into Japanese-flavoured lunches.

**BAKERY CAFÉ** Map pp100–1 Café \$  
365 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe; mains \$4-10; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat & Sun; 🚗 431  
It doesn't look like much, but this little bakery serves satisfying breakfasts, fresh baguettes and filling pasta meals. It's well positioned for the backpackers down the road and a friendly change from other too-cool cafés on the strip.

**SAPPHO ESPRESSO BAR** Map pp100–1 Café \$  
☎ 9552 4498; 51 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe; mains \$4-9; 🕒 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6.30pm Sun; 🚗 431-434  
Hidden away in the back of a sprawling bookshop, Sappho is a wonderfully

bohemian garden café where the walls are scrawled with generations of graffiti. The coffee's excellent, the staff adorable and the food a healthy selection of salads, panini and light breakfast options.

## BALMAIN

### BLUE GINGER Map pp100-1 Southeast Asian \$\$

☎ 9818 4662; 241 Darling St, Balmain; mains \$13-25; ☎ 6-10.30pm; 🍷 Balmain

If you own the cookbook, you'll definitely want to try chef Les Huynh's fresh and fragrant dishes first hand. Not restricted to his Vietnamese roots, Huynh borrows from Thai, Malay and Chinese cuisine to bring the best of the region to his long communal table.

### PINTO THAI Map pp100-1 Thai \$\$

☎ 9555 9236; 315 Darling St, Balmain; mains \$13-24; ☎ noon-11pm; 🍷 Balmain

Avoid the fast and furious takeaway downstairs and try to hook a table in the little upstairs dining room – there are surprising harbour bridge views. Most of the usual Thai faves (curries and stir-fries) are under \$20 but you'll shell out a little more for crab (blue swimmer or soft shell with a lychee salad).

### ALL ABOUT... RAMONA'S

Map pp100-1 Café \$

☎ 9555 1140; 260 Darling St, Balmain; mains \$10-14; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat, 8am-5pm Sun; 🍷 Balmain

It's all about the vibe in this funky café, featuring cool art on the walls and a fish tank fashioned from a 1950s TV set. It's a great place to kick back with a free newspaper, a coffee and a slice of exquisite cheesecake. Sam I Am fans should try the green eggs and ham (scrambled with pesto).

## LEICHHARDT

### CAFÉ JOLLY Map pp100-1 Italian \$\$

☎ 9560 2434; 158 Norton St, Leichhardt; mains \$13-19; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10pm Sat & Sun; ☎ 440

Jolly by name and nature you won't find any surly *prima donnas* here. The food is classic Italian – pasta, risotto and grills. The substantial weekend fry-up breakfasts are Jolly Special, once again by name and nature.

### LA DISFIDA Map pp50-1 Italian \$\$

☎ 9798 8299; 109 Ramsay Rd, Haberfield; mains \$14-18; ☎ 6-9.30pm Wed-Sun; ☎ 437-438

Just up the road in Haberfield, this humble local pizzeria of 13 years' standing serves decent pasta as well, but don't even think about it. Head straight for a delicious traditional thin-crust pizza, hot out of the wood-fired oven. It's been rated the best in Sydney, so don't be surprised if you have to wait for a table.

### LA CREMERIA DE LUCA Map pp100-1 Gelato \$

☎ 9564 1127; 106 Norton St, Leichhardt; 3 scoops \$6; ☎ 6-11pm Mon, 4-11pm Tue, 3-11pm Wed-Fri, noon-midnight Sat, noon-8pm Sun; ☎ 435-438

A main contender for Sydney's best ice cream, the artisans at De Luca whip up all the favourite flavours as well as the more exotic; try the sublime rose petal or chocolate and chilli. They even turn out a beer-flavoured *gelato* for St Paddy's Day.

## NORTH SHORE

The best restaurants north of the bridge dip their feet in the water, some affording fantastic views of the city. Manly's beach-town vibe has resulted in dozens of average restaurants lining the streets, with a couple of starlets in their midst. Local surfer hippies have ensured a sprinkling of organic and vegetarian options.

## LOWER NORTH SHORE

### BATHERS' PAVILION Map p108 French \$\$\$

☎ 9969 5050; The Esplanade, Balmoral Beach; 3 courses/degustation \$115/150; ☎ lunch & dinner; ☎ 257

Perhaps it's the beachside setting that lends an appealing casualness to this finest of dining experiences. The menu is highly seasonal, focussing on produce from small local providers, with plenty of seafood. There's a full alternative menu for vegetarians, including a complete eight-course degustation. A two-course option is available for weekday lunches (\$75).

### RIPPLES Map p108 Mod Oz \$\$\$

☎ 9929 7722; Olympic Dr, Milsoms Point; mains \$22-29; ☎ 7am-11pm

Flanked by the Harbour Bridge and the manic grin of Luna Park, the food does well to compete with the view and come out a winner. Expect lots of seafood with subtle Asian and European flavours on the

ever-changing menu, along with fish and chips (\$22) cooked to crispy perfection.

## BOTTOM OF THE HARBOUR

Map p108 Seafood \$\$

☎ 9969 7911; 21 The Esplanade, Balmoral Beach; fish & chips \$9-22; ☎ 7am-9pm; ☎ 257

Fish and chips and Balmoral Beach go hand in hand so ignore the stylish dining room and grab some takeaway. Yep, it's pricey but this upmarket chippie uses only free-range, organic and sustainable products – meaning that your tuna will have been line-caught, not trawled.

### SOURCE Map p108 Café \$

☎ 9969 1368; 6/914 Military Rd, Mosman; sandwiches \$7.50-8.50; ☎ 6.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat, 7am-1pm Sun; ☎ 257

If you're hankering for a coffee en route to Balmoral or the zoo, grab a seat at the communal table at this new, modern café. These guys are more than passionate about the stuff. Prepare to be tempted by the selection of fresh sandwiches and cakes.

## MANLY

### BLUE WATER CAFÉ Map p110 Café \$\$

☎ 9976 2051; 28 South Steyne, Manly; mains \$16-29; ☎ 7.30am-10pm; 🍷 Manly

The huge portions are a major drawcard at this bustling beach café adorned with surfboards. Choose between pasta, burgers, wraps, *pide* and grills, mostly under \$20 but up to \$29 for a juicy sirloin.

### ALHAMBRA Map p110 Spanish \$\$

☎ 9976 2975; 54 West Esplanade, Manly; mains \$20-26; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, noon-10.30pm Sun; 🍷 Manly

Equal parts Spanish and Moorish, at Alhambra tapas compete with tagine for your attention. In the later part of the week, live guitar and flamenco dancers add to the atmosphere. In winter it's closed from Monday to Tuesday evening.

### JELLYFISH Map p110 Café \$\$

☎ 9977 4555; 95 North Steyne, Manly; mains \$9-26; ☎ 7am-9pm; 🍷 Manly

There are much better places for coffee, but this similarly surfboard-strewn café is a

good choice for a light lunch or heftier dinner. Keep an eye on the surf as you munch on salt and pepper squid or a tasty smoked salmon and avocado wrap (\$11).

### PURE WHOLEFOODS Map p110 Café \$

☎ 8966 9377; 10 Darley Rd, Manly; mains \$6-15; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-5pm Sun; 🍷 Manly

Where Manly's hippie surfers come to refuel, this wholefood mini-market has a great little street café where you can choose from all manner of organic vegetarian goodies, including flavour-filled flans, salads, nori rolls, cakes and cookies. Those on more restrictive diets (including vegan, sugar-free, gluten-free and dairy-free) are also catered for.

### BEANRUSH Map p110 Café \$

☎ 9977 2236; 7 Whistler St, Manly; mains \$7-10; ☎ 6am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-3pm Sat; 🍷 Manly

A small blue box with a little outdoor space, this café serves great coffee made from wonderfully exotic, organic beans; the snacks are mighty fine, too. Worth a visit if your engine needs revving.

## OTHER NEIGHBOURHOODS

Sydney's gastronomic delights aren't limited to the inner-city neighbourhoods. If you're driving up the Northern Beaches there are excellent restaurants to explore. Down south, Cronulla's beachfront is lined with upmarket eateries. Way out west, economically deprived Cabramatta is a magnet for fans of authentic Vietnamese food. Parramatta has some good options, mainly on the riverside.

### PIER Map pp50-1 Seafood \$\$\$

☎ 9327 6561; 594 New South Head Rd, Rose Bay; mains \$44-49; ☎ lunch & dinner; 🍷 Rose Bay

Jutting out over pretty Rose Bay, Pier has a well-deserved reputation for delicately cooked, incredibly fresh seafood that is unsurpassed in Sydney and quite possibly the whole country. A recently added tasting room offers bite-sized versions of the grown-up portions next door; it's still not exactly a cheap option (\$18 to \$34) and don't expect to walk away replete.

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