



restaurants

Stephen Downes
the food critic
with bite

44 Cafes serving only coffee and brownies? That's no longer what happens in our town. In inner-city Smith St, Provenance extracts big flavours from high-quality ingredients. Somewhat casual in its culinary techniques, service and ambience, it scores well enough to be a place to drum up a quick bite



Old Victorian: Provenance has blasted red-brick walls.

Picture: BEN SWINNERTON

eat 8/15 THE lunch list begins with a house selection of what posh places would call antipasto (\$10, \$18) and a soup of the day (\$8). Then five "mains" are listed at ridiculously low prices. Side orders at between \$5 and \$7 — including a walnut, gorgonzola and pear salad, say — can pinch-hit as big dishes, we were told.

The day I visited, a "Moroccan" lentil soup with vegetables was packed with disparate vegie bits and had a tomato-accented base and a nice light fieriness.

Items on the picking plate included a slice of black pud, a few more of a wonderful smoky cured sausage, lightly spiced crisp almonds, thick and flavoursome chickpea and beetroot dips, a small bowl of a salad of cured salmon strings punctuated with baby capers, and a triangle of saganaki-style cheese.

I was astounded, first, by the high quality of the beef in the Provenance's "burger" (\$15) and secondly by the size of the puck. It came with a slice of roasted beetroot, slivers of a sweet-sour gherkin, rocket, tomato and haloumi.

My chilli and fennel sausage "bowl" (\$9.50) was far less interesting, merely a fairly one-dimensional stew of smallish blocks and wedges of cured sausage with chickpeas in a tomato-based sauce.

Two chalked-up cheeses, house-made ice cream, which wasn't available the day I visited, and a selection of tarts and pastries

Provenance

288 Smith St, Collingwood
Ph: 8415 0700
Chef: Matthew Barnard
Open: 11.30am-4pm seven days; 5-10.30pm Tues-Sat; breakfast seven days
Parking: In street, but watch the signs
Cards: MC, Visa
Seats: 50
Liquor status: Licensed.
Cost: About \$33 for three courses; \$75 degustation dinner (five courses, three glasses of wine) on one or two nights each season

Would I go back? Perhaps for a quick bite, especially in the evening.

31
out of 50

drink 7/10

Extremely limited, the list offers five table whites, two rosés, four reds and a sparkling. All drops are served by glass and bottle, the former priced at \$7 or \$8, apart from a Red Hill Estate pinot noir, which is \$9. All but two of the bottle prices are in the \$30s, a Pizzini pinot grigio posted at \$36. Provenance has several bottled beers and St Arnou pale ale on tap.

value 7/10

Bearing in mind the strong flavours from good and better produce, Provenance provides good value. Wines are fairly priced.

staff 6/10

Young and charming, the staff here are busy and fairly casual. It's a cafe, after all, isn't it?

style 3/5

Installed in an old Victorian shop, Provenance has a glass front, red-brick walls blasted back to rawness, an unkept floor of hardwood strips, tables for two and communal tables, paper napkins, good cutlery and glassware and comfy seats.

end the list. The pastry of a generous wedge of chocolate and rosewater tart (\$5.50) was nicely cooked through, its filling brilliantly dark and smooth. But I felt a too heavy hand with rose-flavouring impregnated it.

drink

Paddy Kendler finds a batch of great-tasting wines at fair value

1 Saltram Maker's Table Cabernet Sauvignon 2008, \$8
Many wine lovers find the average young cabernet too closed, astringent and unfriendly, but there are some versions at the cheaper end of the market that are open and enjoyable right now. Maker's Table is a prime example showing plenty of typical black-berry fruit without the usual dry tannic finish. As is the case with the shiraz under the same label, the cabernet is a handy everyday red at a bargain price.
★★★★★

2 St Hallett Gamekeeper's Shiraz Cabernet 2008, \$14
St Hallett has extended its popular Gamekeeper's red range which now consists of shiraz grenache, shiraz and shiraz cabernet. They are all decent drinks and fair value, but the cabernet blend is my preference. It has a little more depth and overall structure than the

others, it's a little more complex and has a wider array of fruit aromas and flavours.
★★★★

3 Goaty Hill Riesling 2008, \$19.50
An impressive expression of the riesling grape, this is a wine of commendable purity featuring fresh and vibrant lemon and lime fruit characters with a lovely infusion of floral fragrance. At present, the acidity is a little keen but this is somewhat offset by some grapy sweetness. If it develops like the excellent '06 over the next year or two, the '08 will be an absolute cracker. Available at Cloudwine stores or contact Stuart, ph: 0423 100 911.
★★★★½

4 Montalto Pennon Hill Rosé 2008, \$20
The latest Pennon Hill rosé is but one of many reasons to visit this progressive



Mornington Peninsula winery. Other reasons include the superb restaurant, the estate-grown olive oils, the extensive vegetable and herb gardens, the views from the hilltop and the reliably excellent pinot noir and chardonnay. The rosé is made from the pinots noir and meunier and features typical cherry and red-berry fruit flavours within a tidy palate.
★★★★½

5 Tamar Ridge Kayena Vineyard Pinot Noir 2007, \$28
Tasmania punches well above its weight with pinot noir and the Kayena clearly makes the point. It has an inviting bouquet of fresh cherry and plum with hints of red berries, sweet spice and oak. It's soft and supple in the mouth with good length of flavour. Compared with most mainland pinots of this quality, the price is more than reasonable.
★★★★★

The verdict ★★★★★ Unbeatable ★★★★★ Fine drop ★★★ Good value ★★ Thirsty? OK ★ Don't bother

Taste the sweet life at Crave Sydney in October



The Sydney International Food Festival

1-31 October
A celebration of Sydney's culturally diverse food scene, from restaurant dinners to markets, street festivals, community events and the finest fine dining.

Art and About

1-25 October
Unique installations, exhibitions and events enliven the laneways, parks and spaces of Sydney in this free public art festival.



Darling Harbour Fiesta

2-5 October
Join Australia's biggest Latin American music and dance festival over three sizzling days and nights — and it's free.



Sydney Harbour Island Hopping

3-25 October
Fantasy, history and culture, for the first time Sydney's iconic harbour islands will be open to explore, discover and share.



World's Funniest Island

17-18 October
A two day comedy festival on Cockatoo Island, Sydney Harbour. One ticket, 200 shows in 18 venues, comedy of all kinds and a million laughs.

Breakfast on the Bridge

25 October
The Sydney Harbour Bridge will play host to Sydney's big picnic breakfast — bring your picnic blanket and enjoy the view.



Seven Bridges Walk

25 October
A free walking experience for all ages along 25km of Sydney Harbour, taking in seven city bridges and event villages.

Discover all there is to Crave at Sydney.com

