



RESTAURANTS

10 of Melbourne's favourite places to dine out

Melbourne

Melbourne is not the place to go if you are on a diet. For the best of Chinese and Asian cuisine head to Chinatown on Little Bourke Street and the neighbouring lanes between Spring and Swanston streets. Fitzroy is the place to go for all-day breakfasts, bohemian Brunswick Street's collection of cool cafes, restaurants and boisterous bars offer something at any time of day. Nearby Smith Street is known for its fine vegetarian and whole foods and plenty of budget-friendly Asian, Greek, Moroccan, and Middle Eastern eateries while the free-spirited alternative culture of Brunswick and Smith streets lives on. Johnston Street is Melbourne's Spanish quarter and home to a range of tapas and flamenco bars. Fed Square has more than 20 edgy but sophisticated restaurants and bars within its modernist space and the riverside promenade of Southbank has a broad range of cafes and restaurants all the way from the Southgate complex to the Crown Casino – many with outdoor terraces and balconies where you can dine alfresco and watch street performers and passing pedestrians while taking in the stunning views of the cityscape as it lights up at night.

5 SOS: Australia's first 'veg-aquarian' restaurant, SOS only uses ethically harvested and sustainable foods, taking environmentally sound eating to new heights. Level 3, Melbourne Central, 211 La Trobe St. Tel: (03) 9654 0808.

2 FLOWER DRUM: Flower Drum is one of Melbourne's most renowned restaurants, serving up superb Cantonese dishes. Pricey, but worth it. 17 Market Lane. Tel: (03) 9662 3655

3 TAXI: Taxi serves a delicious fusion of contemporary Japanese and Australian cuisine, located on top of Transport Hotel with views of the city. Tel: (03) 9654 8808

4 MECCA: Hearty tanginess and innovative modern Middle Eastern fare at Southbank. Tel: (03) 9682 2999.

5 MECCA BAH: Mecca Bah is the place to go in Melbourne's newest dining precinct, New Quay at Melbourne Docklands opposite Telstra Dome on Victoria Harbour. Share a gourmet pizza or mouth-watering mezze plate. Tel: (03) 9642 1300

6 LYGON STREET, CARLTON: not much has changed in Lygon Street (Melbourne's Little Italy) since the 1950s. It's still the place to go for great pizza, pasta and Italian food dished out in unpretentious and fad free eateries in the biggest selection of Italian restaurants and cafes in Australia. A Lygon Street institution, Casa Del Gelato serves Melbourne's best ice cream and gelati. 163 Lygon St, Carlton.

7 VUE DE MONDE: two times winner of the coveted Restaurant of the Year in The Age Good Food Guide. Chef Shannon Bennett does a modern take on French classics, combined with exceptional wine service, dedicated staff and the buzz of an open kitchen. Normanby Chambers 430 Little Collins St. Tel: (03) 9691 3888.

8 GINGERBOY: South-east Asian hawker and street food, from dumplings to whole fried snapper and green chicken curry. 27-29 Crossley St, Melbourne. Tel: (03) 9662 4200.

9 CIRCA, THE PRINCE: slick and stylish, this is one of the cities best places to dine out. 2 Acland Street. Tel: (03) 9536 1122.

10 MOVIDA: close your eyes and you'll think you're in an inner-Madrid neighbourhood bodega, down an ally-way just off Gran Via. This stylish tapas and wine bar is great for a quick tapa and a glass of wine or a more leisurely dinner. 1 Hosier Lane. Tel: (03) 9663-3038.