

KITCHEN CONFIDENTIAL

Chef's guide to ... BELLARINE PENINSULA

DWAYNE BOURKE

Jack Rabbit Vineyard
executive chef



MR MUSSELS

Mr Mussels is our supplier at Jack Rabbit. Portarlington Mussels are one of our most popular dishes – you can even see the mussel beds from our restaurant. We are fortunate to get delivery direct from the bay daily. Mr Mussels also sells fresh mussels from the pier at Portarlington every weekend of the year (and daily in summer).
Portarlington Pier, 2A Harding St, Portarlington

WHITE FISHERIES

These guys always have the freshest local seafood. The family-run business is made up of a group of fishermen who share about 40 years' experience. They run their own boats and have built strong relationships with other local fishermen. White Fisheries supply more than 150 restaurants in the area. They also have an extremely busy shop with queues often out of the door and up the road.
1/35-39 Murradoc Rd, Drysdale

THE RANGE @ CURLEWIS

I spend a lot of time with my family here. It has a fun and casual approach, which keeps everyone entertained. The Range also has value-for-money food, such as super tasty burgers, and an extensive beer and wine list.
1201 Portarlington Rd, Curlewis

MERNE AT LIGHTHOUSE

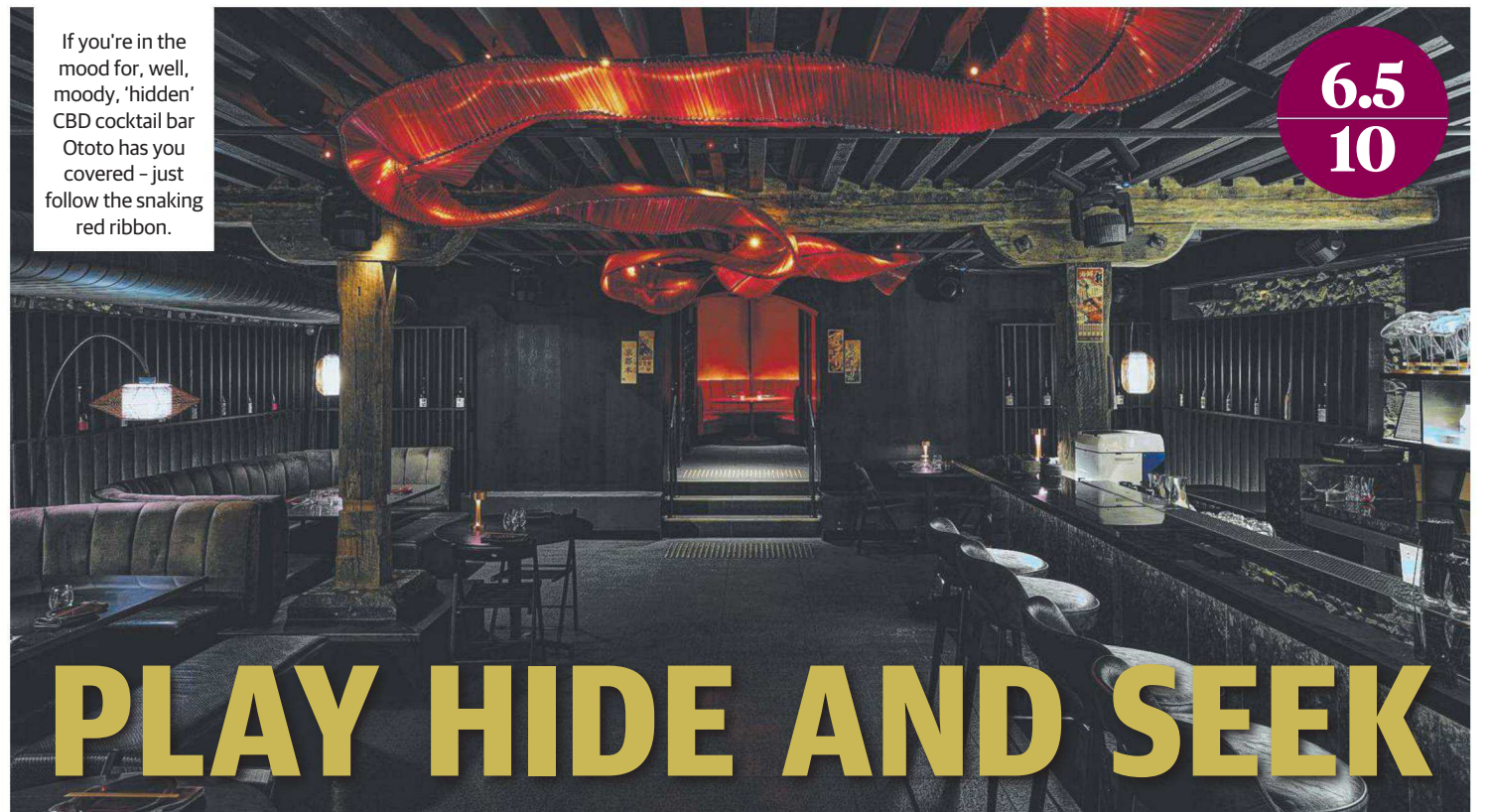
This is one of the Bellarine's most premium dining destinations with great views across the olive groves. The team has a professional approach to all aspects of the business. Merne has a strong wine list and impressive beer selection. It's always a treat if you're looking for something a little different to match with amazing offerings.
650 Andersons Rd, Drysdale

THE WHISKERY

This is a great adult spot to sit, relax and enjoy some grown-up drinks. Think beautifully crafted whisky, gin and cocktails with light snacks. We use Whiskery gin at Jack Rabbit across both the food and drinks menu. It's such a quality product with amazing aromatics on display. The place is very welcoming and a really comfortable spot to sit and spend an afternoon.
2 Scotchmans Road, Drysdale

If you're in the mood for, well, moody, 'hidden' CBD cocktail bar Ototo has you covered – just follow the snaking red ribbon.

6.5
10



PLAY HIDE AND SEEK

REVIEW
KARA MONSSEN

HERE'S some food for thought: Melburnians love a bar. We'll raise a glass to almost any new watering hole that plants a stake in our city, be it beneath the bustling streets of our concrete jungle or swinging high in its treetops.

And if it's any good – we will always tell a mate about it.

After visiting Ototo, the new-ish Japanese fusion bar that's opened beneath restaurant sibling, Akaiito, there was no further chat.

But that's not to say what owner **CHRISTINE CHEN** and head chef **WINSTON ZHANG** are doing at the broody drinking den is all bad, either.

The duo have been running traditional Japanese restaurant, Akaiito, for about three years but but in a lockdown recalibration rethought the use of the basement to open Ototo. They've taken a mod-Asian template, installed moody interiors and ensured there's enough sake and snacks to feel the part.

Look for the Akaiito street sign and let the zippy red ribbon art fixture pulsing along the ceiling lure you downstairs.

The space is all black, with charming nods to the room's

former life as a bank, with colonial-era original wooden beams and bluestone walls.

Four roomy, grey, semicircle booths take up one side of the 90-seater, with a few high tops and a sleek long black marble bar occupying the other.

We're here for drinking, and bartending whiz **LIONEL ONG** knows what'll do the trick.

Choose from all the usual suspects, as well as sake, umeshu (sweet plum wine), ice-cold beer on tap (including Ototo's rotating house pour) and glass kegs filled with pre-batched spirits such as nori and burnt-butter fat-washed gins.

OTOTO

• 349-351 Flinders Ln, Melbourne

• ototo.com.au

Open: Tue-Sat: from 5pm.

Cost: Snacks (\$11-\$24). Large plates (\$19-\$48). Dessert (\$18)

Go-to dish: Crispy half roasted chicken.

Try this if you like: Robata, Longsong.

As kooky as they read, those cocktails are firecrackers, namely the chilli-infused tequila, a Southeast Asian spin on the margherita, loaded with lemongrass, ginger, kaffir lime and salty-savoury shrimp attitude.

Even the mocktails are soberingly good: a floral, mint and cucumber kombucha tea is hit-the-spot refreshing.

When it comes to food, if Akaiito is a staunch traditionalist, then Ototo is the unruly younger sibling running amok and losing its way with Chinese, Malaysian, Japanese and Korean flavours.

Zhang (formerly of Sydney's Sokyō) throws two whole squid (\$32) on the traditional Japanese robata grill until just cooked, scores and drenches them in a glowing orange lap cheong (Chinese sausage) sauce that lacks char or spice. A missed flavour opportunity but nice enough.

The sashimi platter (\$27 for nine pieces, \$45 for 15) is fail safe and made up of Aussie-caught seafood (save for the Hokkaido scallops) and is expertly sliced, with supple tiles best swiped in heart-starting wasabi or salty soy.

Sadly my friend's marker of "if the sashimi is good, that's a sign of things to come" is really only true for part of our Ototo experience.

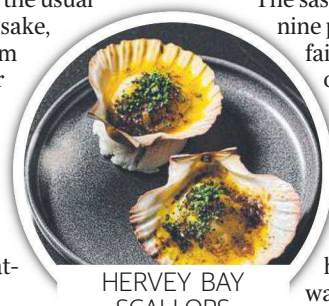
I was happy with the number of snack options – it's a solid list – and you can certainly make a meal of either tender black Angus short ribs (\$48), a giant, kombu (seaweed) butter soaked hunk of roasted pumpkin (\$19) or the fried half roast chicken (\$28). The latter is a standout, roasted for three hours then dunked whole in the fryer until crisp and drowned in a sweet and sour Shandong sauce made from chilli, garlic, vinegar and soy. Aside from being a tad overcooked and messy to eat, that sauce is the best thing we tasted all night.

A few things at Ototo need a rethink.

I'm talking more serviettes, appropriate cutlery and larger (or more) side plates. It's a bit dark and fiddly to eat fried chicken and not have a stain on your shirt. And the toilets? The wobbly doorknobs had me thinking I'd locked myself in, which could be amusing (or scary) after a few drinks.

The pace is slow, the vibe a little low midweek and the music odd (did someone say **MICHAEL BUBLE?**)

Ototo will do the trick for an after work bev or snack yet offers not much more that's worth telling a mate about.



HERVEY BAY SCALLOPS

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RAISING THE PULSE, PAGE 28

OUR favourite family event, the Melbourne Royal Show, is back after a two-year hiatus, and foodies haven't been forgotten.

Whether you're after something on the go or keen to feast after a day on your feet, there'll be plenty to eat and drink.

This year some of the city's favourite restaurants and cafes will make their show debut – lobbying in the new Graze Pavilion and Melbourne Laneway areas.

Here are 10 delicious things to try at this year's show.

1. SMOKED BRISKET BURGER BY BURN CITY SMOKERS, \$17

Cooked low and slow for 14 hours, this juicy brisket is jammed between two milk buns with a healthy dose of Burn City's own barbecue sauce, French's yellow mustard and crinkly pickles. Add fries for \$4 to make a meal of it.
Pura Pavilion



2. TUNA MELT BY NICO'S SANDWICH DELI, \$17

One of Melbourne's favourite sanger shops is making its show debut with four fresh sandwiches and melts. This crowd favourite oozes gooey Swiss cheese, fluffy tuna, capers, cornichons, pickled chilli and fennel between toasted sourdough. Tabasco is optional for an extra kick.
Graze Pavilion

3. SPINACH CASCATELLI WITH RAGU BY PASTA POETRY, \$20

The cook-at-home pasta kings will sling their lockdown-famous ragu made with six-hour slow cooked beef and pork, with ruffles of fresh spinach cascattelli. Not a meat lover? They also sell a mean mac n' cheese.
Graze Pavilion



4. BEEF AND GRAVY PIE BY WONDER PIES, \$9

You can't go wrong with a meat pie in September. Celebrate both grand final and show week by wrapping your laughing gear around Wonder Pies' traditional beef-and-gravy number. Chunks of tender meat are



Showgoers can tuck into sumptuous sangers made by Matt Willis and Tom Peasnell at Nico's Sandwich Deli in the Graze Pavilion. Picture: Jake Nowakowski

All the fun of the fare

tumbled in a robust gravy, with chef Ray Capaldi's famous shortcrust and French-glazed puff giving other pie shops a run for their money.
Melbourne Laneway



5. CHICKEN BAO BY KATSU KING X BAO DOWN, \$15

These Grazeland regulars are taking their Japanese street food and ever-popular crispy chicken bao to two stands in the showgrounds. Think golden crumbed chicken, pickled red cabbage and coriander with a good squirt of Kewpie mayo in a cloud-like bao bun.
Graze Pavilion, Eat Street Grand Pavilion

6. BIRRIA TACOS BY DINGO ATE MY TACO, \$21 FOR THREE

Melt-in-your-mouth tender beef tresses are topped with Spanish

cheese Oaxaca, onion and coriander and wrapped snug in a white corn tortilla. Dunk your taco in a spicy salsa or brisket birria consommé for the ultimate experience. Have a serviette ready.
MasterChef Garden

7. LOBSTER ROLL BY CLAW AND TAIL, \$23

This springtime snack takes WA lobster and sweet prawn meat, tumbles it in a creamy Kewpie mayonnaise and lemon, before piling it on a crunchy roll.
Graze Pavilion

8. SCONES WITH JAM AND CREAM BY THE CWA, \$6

There are three certainties in life: death, taxes and knowing the Country Women's Association make the best baked goods. Pop into the CWA Pavilion for a spot of afternoon tea, where there will be

fluffy scones, jam and whipped cream aplenty.
CWA Pavilion

9. BIRTHDAY CAKE SUNDAE BY GELATO MESSINA, \$10

Gelato Messina is making three types of sundae for the show, including the birthday cake, which is fior di latte gelato topped with a vanilla cake crumble and sprinkles. Golden Gaytime and pavlova-inspired ones are also sure to impress.
MasterChef Garden, Pura Pavilion

10. CREME BRÛLÉE BY THE BRÛLÉE CART, \$9

This classic is on point: torched caramel shatter glass top and indulgent vanilla bean crème within. The dilemma is to share it or keep it for yourself.
Graze Pavilion







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