

best brunches

Special report

Take a tasty break from the hustle and bustle

Carla Grossetti finds some great places to enjoy a mid-morning meal.

Sydney has a vast array of cafes, pubs and restaurants where you can indulge in a hearty or healthy brunch. From cheap-and-cheery eggs and bacon to posh porridge, there's something for everyone.

Barista and Cook @ Waterloo

The Scandustrial-inspired fit-out at Barista and Cook is as fresh and clean as the menu and a haven away from the hustle and bustle going on outside. Owner Alan Thompson (ex-Bang Bang) says the cafe with the dedicated brew bar does what it says on the tin: "It's good food and coffee done well." The virtuous will give thanks for the coffee and kombucha over a bowl of smoked trout kedgeree while the hungover are bound to perk up after mac 'n' cheese toasties and Southern fried chicken and a very Shazammable playlist.

834 Bourke Street, Waterloo, 8399 1234, baristaandcook.com.au

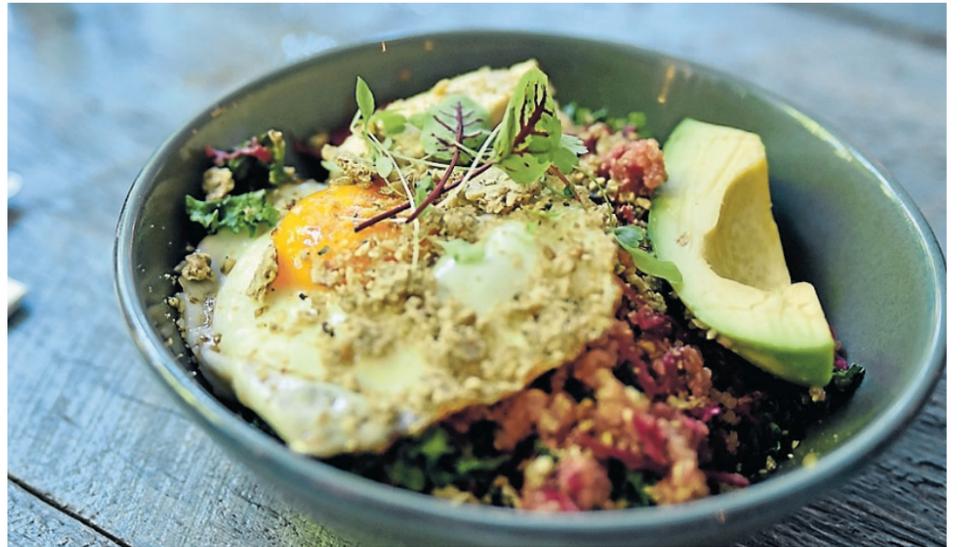
Bondi Harvest @ Bondi Junction

Bondi Harvest is sandwiched between Goodtime Burgers and underneath El Topo Mexican in The Eastern and, although a little off the tourist track, warrants a visit for its beautiful brunch options. Star dishes worth sampling include house Bircher with baked apple and chia, or the caveman bowl of kale, quinoa, fermented veggies topped with avocado, hummus, fried eggs and cosmic crackers. A quick Google-stalk of Guy Turland and Mark Alston's Youtube cooking show will make you want to buy a copy of their recently released *Bondi Harvest* (\$29.95) cookbook so you can be more like them.

500 Oxford Street, Bondi Junction, 9387 7828, theeastern.com.au/bondiharvest

Blackstar Pastry @ Rosebery

Good Food recently named the watermelon and strawberry cake at Blackstar Pastry as one of Sydney's Top 10 Cult Desserts. Pastry chef Christopher The walks the tightrope between tradition and innovation with other



standout treats such as vegan chocolate popcorn cake, lemon myrtle chiffon cake and the orange cake with Persian figs. Savoury toothies are also made to feel special after a marvellously meaty lamb shank and red wine pie. Coffee by The Little Marionette seals the mid-morning meal deal. C1 85-113 Dunning Avenue, Rosebery, 9557 8656, blackstarpastry.com.au

Cuckoo Callay

Watch your train pull out of Newtown Station while chowing down on a Wildly Boaring Burger or No More #Hashtags breakfast of vintage cheddar and basil potato croquette, tomato-braised kale and broad beans, parmesan crisp and 63-degree

egg. Those who are #cuckooforbacon should also check out Cuckoo Callay's annual 2016 Bacon Brewfest Festival, which runs until May 22 in Central Park, Chippendale. Expect piggy puns galore at this pop-up shrine to cured meat and craft beer with offering such as Pig Deal Fritters paired with craft beer. Newtown Railway Station, 9557 7006, cuckoo-callay.com.au

Devon on Danks

Skip breakfast safe in the knowledge that you will be well fed at Devon on Danks, which is a hot spot for everyone from inner urbanites to A-listers. The cafe is the place to go post-Salute to the Sun for a Yogi's Bowl of mixed quinoa, yoghurt, grains, freeze-dried

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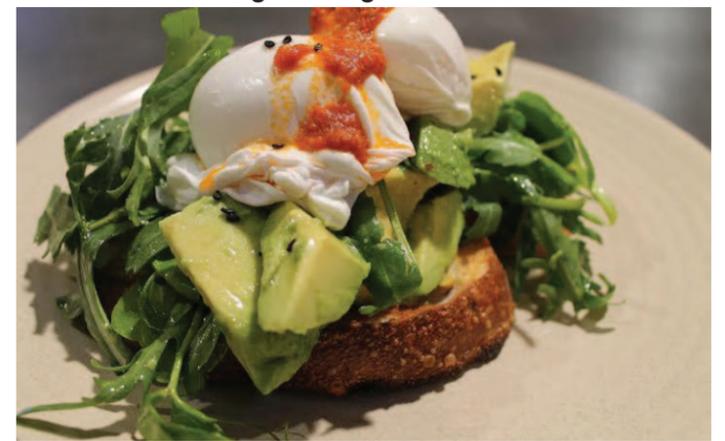
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puffed amaranth, seeds and nuts, goji berries, chia and fresh fruit. You can also indulge in playful dishes such as My Second Asian Cousin Gone Summery or the Manny P Burger of annatto-spiced chicken fillet, chilli mayo, fragrant herbs and pickles. **2 Danks Street, Waterloo, 9698 7795, devoncafe.com.au**

Yellow @ Pott's Point

Yellow recently announced it will shift to an all-vegetarian menu for dinner seven nights a week. Although the weekend brunch menu still includes carnivorous options, it is also built around fruit and vegetables that have had very little done to them and are all the better for it. Baked eggs with cauliflower,

spinach and parmesan or muesli with poached rhubarb and yoghurt might not push into new brunch frontiers, but the flavours are seductive. Cash in your golden ticket during Parched March for a breakfast Bellini or martini.

57 Macleay Street, Pott's Point, 9332 2344, yellowssydney.com.au

Greenhouse Gypsy @ Mona Vale

Head north of the city to this cute little cafe where kombucha-fuelled yogis like to congregate. There are cushions and couches, and a madcap mix of chunky tables and comfy chairs filled with locals who are



here for more than just the coffee made with matcha. Fans of the one-pot Indian dish known as kitchari flock here for this healthful ayurvedic creation of grains, greens and legumes. The vegan-friendly cafe also summons followers with Coco-Whip soft-serve, rainbow salads, fresh pumpkin hummus, nori rolls, dehydrated falafel and raw pad Thai.

5/1-5 Bungan Street, Mona Vale, greenhousegypsy.com

Bianco Nero Espresso @ Gymea

The national Productivity Commission should investigate Bianco Nero's role in

enticing Shire commuters to miss the 7.15am train scheduled to get them to work on time. Regulars rave about this Gymea gem for a roster of reasons: friendly staff, a low-key vibe, great Single O coffee and fabulous food. Wave smugly at those harried commuters trundling past on the train while enjoying great brunch bets: house-roasted muesli, acai, zucchini waffle with poached egg, housemade labneh, avocado, tomato relish and rocket served on sourdough.

1/44 Gymea Bay Road, Gymea, 9531 4443, bianconero.com.au

Excelsior Jones @ Ashfield

Attracting a mix of inner westies – from food lovers to coffee snobs and young families – this popular cafe has dialled up Ashfield as a destination. The Sunday brunch is especially popular with families and chef Dai Bielefeldt and her team put on a fine spread. Ponder whether to kick-start your day with the pork and salmon hash with fried buckwheat and poached egg or the beef ribwich. Alternatively, smash a bacon and egg sanga. **139 Queen Street, Ashfield, 9799 3240, excelsiorjones.com**



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Toast on the coast at beachside cafes

Carla Grossetti discovers why food lovers do like to be beside the seaside.

Savour a brunch to die for at one of the many cafes dotted along shopping strips in seaside suburbs along Sydney's inner coast.

The Boathouse @ Balmoral Beach

When new life was breathed into the old Balmoral Boatshed four years ago, it was resurrected into a ravishing beauty. Your chances of snagging a table are better at brunch time. Order avocado and tomato on charred toast or ditch the diet diary and plump for a bacon and egg roll instead. Both the people watching and the view are so beguiling you may forget you came here for the food.

2 The Esplanade, Balmoral Beach, 9974 5440, theboathousebb.com.au

Blackwood Pantry @ Cronulla

Blackwood Pantry is as polished and pretty as a shell you might find on the nearby beach

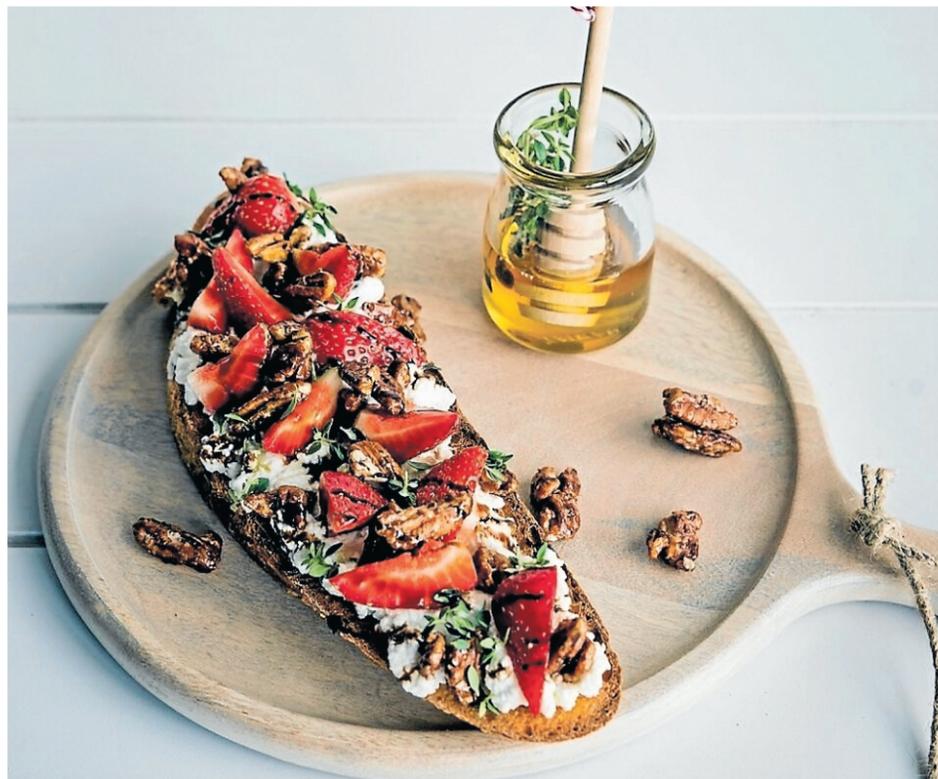
the new eatery is named after. Locals in the know like to come here post-surf for the unerringly excellent food produced by chef Robert Lechowicz, who has left behind the Michelin-starred restaurants where he trained in Europe to return to his roots in the Shire. Blackwood Pantry is a proper grown-up space that is getting a lot of love for its hyper-seasonal menu, young, friendly staff and elegant interior. Go-to dishes: strawberry ricotta toast, fresh basil yoghurt or vanilla-poached salmon.

5/33 Surf Lane, Cronulla, 9544 4857, blackwoodpantry.com.au

bill's @ Bondi Beach

bill's, the eponymous restaurant named after cook Bill Granger, shines bright in the sunny heart of Bondi Beach. Brunch here is wonderfully comfortable and relaxed and beckons both locals and tourists. While bill's ricotta hotcakes have been widely copied, they have not been surpassed, especially when topped with slices of banana and slathered in honeycomb butter. Devotees also enjoy breakfast martinis with soft-boiled eggs and sourdough soldiers. Do as the locals do: brunch at bill's before hitting the beach.

79 Hall Street, Bondi Beach, 8412 0700, bills.com.au



Strawberry ricotta toast at Blackwood Pantry, Cronulla.

Three Blue Ducks @ Bronte

This bright, laidback restaurant has a bustling vibe thanks in part to the local community who have been permanent fixtures since it opened by the beach six years ago. The menu is built around vegetables that are grown in the restaurant garden, eggs delivered by the resident chooks and sustainably sourced meat and seafood. Executive chef Darren Robertson has curated a cracking menu: try the mango lassi Bircher muesli or corn fritters with guacamole, fermented cabbage, jalapeno, herb salad, labneh and poached eggs.

143 Macpherson Street, Bronte, 9389 0010, threblueducks.com

The Grumpy Baker @ Vaucluse

Brunch at The Grumpy Baker here is a civilised affair. You can choose to sit outside near the flower stall or opt for inside, where you can admire the chic couples walking past in their activewear. The cafe's success is based on Michael Cthurmer's devotion to sourcing quality ingredients. Order the green omelette with feta and olive, mint, Israeli salad and labneh on sourdough or googy eggs with sourdough soldiers.

Shop 6, 767 Old South Head Road, Vaucluse, 9337 5179, thegrumpybaker.com.au

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Country cafes offer fresh local flavours

Away from the city, tradition mixes with a sense of adventure.

Escape to the country and enjoy some of the local produce and culinary creations in various establishments from a good old-fashioned fry-up to something more edgy.

Alby & Esthers @ Mudgee

Dining under the vines in the old brick-walled courtyard, hidden down an alley, feels intrepid. There is also a gratifying sense of being “in the country” with farmhouse options such as the famous jaffle of smoked ham, Duneedoo egg and Swiss cheese with relish or the smoked trout brunch with potato, beetroot and wilted silverbeet. Stay and play on Friday and Saturday nights when the cafe becomes a wine bar. **Up the Alley, 61 Market Street, Albyandesthers.com.au**

The Agrestic Grocer @ Orange

This atmospheric barn of a place, which was the area’s oldest cool room, was reconfigured in 2014 to include a restaurant and retail

store selling everything from The Second Mouse Cheese to Sacred Mountain Cider, Abilene Grove olive oil, Perthville sausages and Badlands Brewery Ale. Much acclaimed are the sweet and savoury cherry pikelets, organic coconut and buckwheat muesli and poached eggs on sourdough with a cup of Orange Roasting Co. coffee. **426 Molong Road, Orange, 6360 4604, www.facebook.com/theagresticgrocer**

The Pipeclay Pumphouse @ Mudgee

The land around this rustic family-run restaurant attached to the Robert Stein Vineyard clearly inspires chef Andy Crestani in the kitchen, with his commitment to seasonality on show in the use of ingredients grown or produced onsite. Brunch here is robust, as if it were intended for workers coming in from the fields. A tempting option is the farmers’ breakfast with bacon, house-made baked beans, tomato relish, Leemore mushroom, sausage and your choice of eggs. A lighter option is the pecan, date and coconut toasted muesli. Make time for a tasting at the cellar door. **Robert Stein Vineyard & Winery, Pipeclay Lane Mudgee, 6373 3998, pipeclaypumphouse.com.au**



Much acclaimed fare at The Agrestic Grocer, Orange.

Three Bean Espresso Apothecary Kitchen @ Hamilton (Newcastle)

Owner Ben Armstrong is the great-grandson of a Finnish sailor who jumped ship to find his fortune in about 1880. That spirit of adventure is evident at this edgy eatery that is a hotspot for Hamilton hippies. The cafe is thriving, as are the bacteria full of nutrients in ingredients such as the Greek yoghurt culture, kombucha and kefir, which have made the cafe somewhat of a community co-op. Feel better about yourself after a wholesome bowl of wet muesli, granola, summer fruits and fresh honeycomb topped with pollen. **Shop 5, 103 Tudor St, Hamilton, 4961 2020, apothecarykitchen.com.au**

The Glass Onion Society @ Long Jetty

The Glass Onion Society is a hip cafe that pulls a mix of boho types with bed hair, plaid-clad hipsters and bright young things with extravagant piercings and neck tats. Colonise the vintage couch and order brunch beauties such as Bircher bonanza with a dainty swirl of mango puree topped with seasonal fruit, chia seeds and macadamia nut granola or The Tropics of poached eggs, grilled haloumi, smoked salmon, salt-cured asparagus, rocket and cherry tomato salad in a lime chilli vinaigrette, before trawling the nearby art galleries and op shops. **Shop 1&2/308 The Entrance Road, Long Jetty, 4326 1650, facebook.com/theglassonionsociety**

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