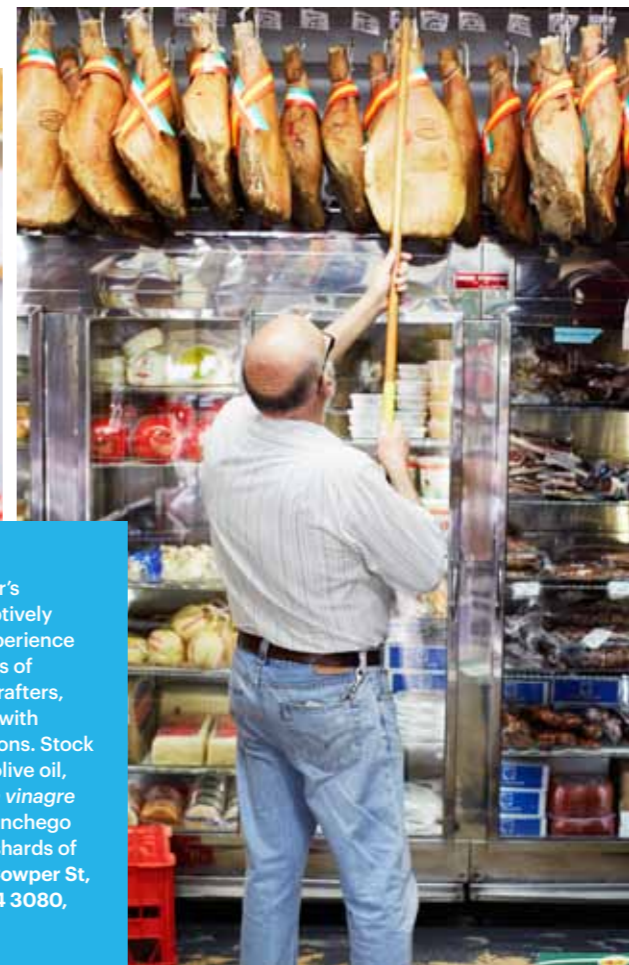




◀▼ **Il Nido Trattoria Pizzeria**
This homey, no-nonsense family-run Italian restaurant serves as a quasi hub for the Italian community. “Coming into the restaurant gives customers a taste of home,” says Alcide Giuliani, 68, known as Giulio, who arrived in the area from Rome in the early 70s. Take his son Adriano’s advice and order *quattro formaggi* pizza or the *osso bucco*. Shop 1/54 Balgownie Rd, Balgownie (02) 4284 8664, ilnido.com.au.



◀▶ **Oscar’s Deli**
Just to walk into Oscar’s (pictured right) deceptively modest shop is an experience as the eyes take in legs of *jamón*, packed to the rafters, and a floor blanketed with gastronomic distractions. Stock up on canned tapas, olive oil, olives, *boquerones en vinagre* (white anchovies), manchego cheese and raggedy shards of aged reggiano. 200 Cowper St, Warrawong, (02) 4274 3080, oscardeli.com.au.



▼▲ **Tonitto Continental Cakes**
Owner Laurence Tonitto says the recipes for his traditional signature cake – an Italian continental cake (below) – have been passed down through generations. The layered cake comprises vanilla sponge laced with liqueur and filled with chocolate custard. Their pastries (above) are also popular. 169 Wentworth St, Port Kembla, (02) 4275 1977, tonittocakes.com.au.

In the neighbourhood ILLAWARRA, NSW

As you approach the Illawarra, the giant steelworks loom large. But look beyond the factory smoke bruising the sky to find old-fashioned grocers and authentic delis and eateries that stand as reminders of the many migrant groups that have helped shape the blue-collar community since white settlement.

President of the Illawarra Historical Society, Carol Herben, says the region’s population doubled between 1947 and 1991, when the number of overseas-born residents increased eight-fold, from 9000 to 73,000. There is a strong Macedonian community in Cringila, as well as a number of other European and Middle Eastern migrants, and neighbouring suburbs present a similar cultural makeup.

Klime Nedeski’s parents George and Pavlina were among the first wave of Macedonians to migrate to Cringila in search of a better life. The 37-year-old now manages K. Nedeski’s Deli (17 Lake Ave, Cringila, (02) 4275 1215), run by the family since the 1970s.

Inside the tiny shop, located on an arterial route used by steel workers shuttling to and from work, jars of red *ajvar* (capsicum relish) and packets of *jufki* (large ribbons of pasta) are heaped high on the shelves. However, the area’s delicate economic outlook – due to the partial closure of Port Kembla steelworks – has forced Klime to diversify. “I have a lot of specialty products, but my main line of business is now making sandwiches for the steel workers,” he says.

Continue 100m up the hill to 5-Star Burek. Naumce Gavrilovski towers above the counter at his barely marked shop front, where he

toils alongside wife Tatiana, 45, dishing out hundreds of rounds of the flaky baked *burek* (stuffed coiled filo pastry) each day.

The 48-year-old followed his parents to Australia in 1986 and eventually took over the bakery, which has been in the family for two decades. “Everything about my food is 100 per cent Macedonian... except the meat and cheese burek. That’s evolved as an Aussie burek after my Australian customers started requesting it,” says Naumce.

Another long-term resident is Tonitto Continental Cakes in neighbouring suburb Port Kembla; the family-run *pasticceria* has been going strong for four decades. Laurence Tonitto took over the business from his parents in 1995, at the age of 25. “I grew up in the shop and was involved in making cakes from the age of about eight. My nickname was ‘cake man’ at school,” says Laurence.

A short drive north past the rows of houses in Port Kembla is Il Nido Trattoria Pizzeria. ‘Il Nido’ is Italian for ‘the nest’ and according to manager Adriano Giuliani, 32, it’s become a popular haunt for the entire community. “My dad has owned pizzerias around the Illawarra for over 30 years. We have a loyal following. We’ve watched our customer base grow from predominantly Italian steelworkers to include Middle Eastern migrants and, now, Asian university students, too,” he says.

Another fixture on food-focused itineraries in the Illawarra is Oscar’s Deli. Uruguay native Oscar Heijo arrived in the area in 1973 as a political and economic refugee. Oscar opened his own deli in 1982, and the 72-year-old has since carved out a name for himself as a specialist purveyor of Spanish and Italian goods. “I don’t do trendy, I go with my heart. Good food is what I know,” says Oscar.

And, like many of the delis and eateries worth a detour in the Illawarra, Oscar’s is as unpretentious and authentic as the neighbourhood itself. 🍷

▶▶ **5-Star Burek**
This cult hole-in-the-wall bakery has customers curling out the door in peak hour for *burek* – crisp rounds of paper-thin pastry filled with mince, spinach and cheese. Here, in the back streets of Cringila, the northern Slavic cuisine bowed to requests from its Aussie customer base to combine its aromatic meat filling with cheese; it’s now their best-seller. Shop 2/42 Newcastle St, Cringila, (02) 4276 1111.



WORDS CARLA GROSSETTI PHOTOGRAPHY TOM DONALD