

# THE GOOD LIFE FOOD & WINE

## FIVE OF A KIND

**BEER GARDENS** Winter's finally over, so now's the time to discover some recent additions to our bar scene with a warming dose of sunshine, writes **Chris Canty**.



### JOHNSTON ST MILK BAR

THIS place could be mistaken for somebody's house: a ping-pong table there, instruments lying around here, a pile of books and board games out the front. Next door to Victoria Park station, the beer garden is home to a mishmash of outdoor furniture, a solitary Romanesque female statue and chilled locals enjoying the rays. The menu is dominated by pizza, with 11 vegetarian options. Try the pork-belly, with pineapple, chilli and coriander, and pair it with a tipple from a beer list that focuses on the US, homeland of owner Eric Kowalewski. We especially like the "milk menu", paying homage to old-school thickshakes. On Wednesday and Friday nights, there's live music and pizzas and beers are just \$5. BYO wine is a nice touch, too.  
274 Johnston Street, Abbotsford,  
0422 528 820, Tue-Sat 7am-10pm



### BADGER VS. HAWK

IT'S quintessential of this town to walk down a laneway in search of a new bar, but two laneways to arrive at a garage roller door? That's really Melbourne. Opened in April, this venue has a menu that's all about good burgers and craft beers. If that sounds familiar these days, owner Cosmo Hawke, who has a background in coffee, cheekily thought of calling them "hoax-ta-burgers". We recommend the Black Eye Bean version. The undercover courtyard is dotted with seven tables, which are pulled to one side when the DJs and beat-box competitions begin and nearby RMIT students cheer them on. During the day, it operates as a cafe.  
Rear, 333 La Trobe Street, city,  
0466 699 900, Thur-Sat 5-11pm



### THE ALEHOUSE PROJECT

BRUNSWICK and beer go hand in hand, and the connection continues with the opening of this new beer den. Its real strength is getting one-off kegs and hard-to-find offerings from craft breweries, mainly from Victoria. The menu also tips its hat to the frothy stuff, with beer-inspired dishes such as the popular stout-braised venison osso buco pie. A beer degustation menu is also offered once a month. The spacious beer garden has long tables ideal for groups and is dominated by a big tree in the middle, which is home to two possums that get curious at night.  
98 Lygon Street, Brunswick East,  
9387 1218, Tues-Thur noon-12am,  
Fri noon-1am, Sat 8am-1am, Sun  
8am-12am



### THE SNUG PUBLIC HOUSE

IRISH husband-and-wife team Michael and Kim Lynch had been working in Melbourne's Irish pubs for years, until they took the plunge and opened the Snug in July. Since then, they have been winning plaudits for their Irish-inspired menu, full of classics such as brown beef stew, but their mammoth roast is a real winner. Lovely home-made soda bread comes with each meal. The beer garden is tiny, with wooden stools placed around small wooden tables, creating a communal or "snug" atmosphere where meeting strangers is encouraged. There's also Guinness, stored and poured to perfection, which is especially good for those trying to make a dint in the 100-pint club.  
68 Sydney Road, Brunswick,  
9388 8756, noon-11pm daily,  
closed Tuesdays



### PURE POP RECORDS

WHILE not as new as the others featured here, this intimate courtyard (out the back of a music store) is under threat of closure after a solitary neighbour complained about the noise. To raise the \$100,000 needed to soundproof it, a "buy a brick" campaign is underway — every donor will be immortalised with an engraved metallic plaque. Foodwise, try simple, tasty toasties with names that pay homage to music acts, including "Feta Be Home Soon" and "You Ham I". The lone beer tap (Boag's) does a roaring trade when live music starts. With only a few seats dotted against the wall — and a classic "outdoor dunny" — it's best to get in early.  
221 Barkly Street, St Kilda,  
9525 5066, Tues-Fri 10am-11pm,  
Sunday noon-11pm

WHAT TO DRINK

REFRESHING WHITES