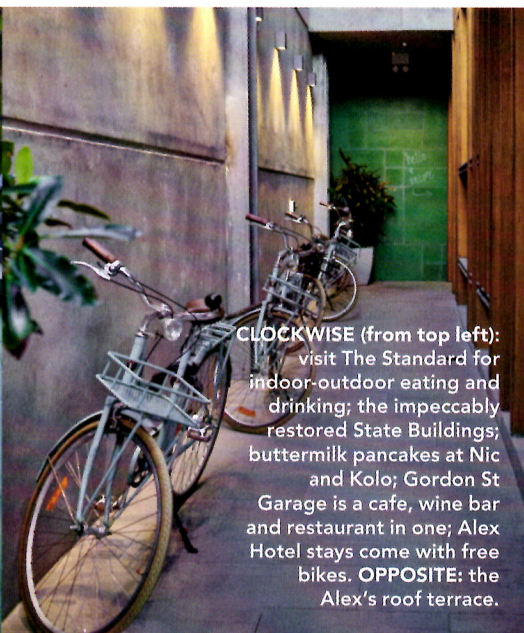


LOCAVORE.



CLOCKWISE (from top left): visit The Standard for indoor-outdoor eating and drinking; the impeccably restored State Buildings; buttermilk pancakes at Nic and Kolo; Gordon St Garage is a cafe, wine bar and restaurant in one; Alex Hotel stays come with free bikes. OPPOSITE: the Alex's roof terrace.





# PERTH

Forget any prejudices you might hold against our most remote capital city. Food and lifestyle writer **Lindy Alexander** has mined top Perth chef Jed Gerrard for the best of this rapidly evolving city, while our own **George Epaminondas** reveals its toniest digs.

PHOTOGRAPHY REBECCA MANSELL





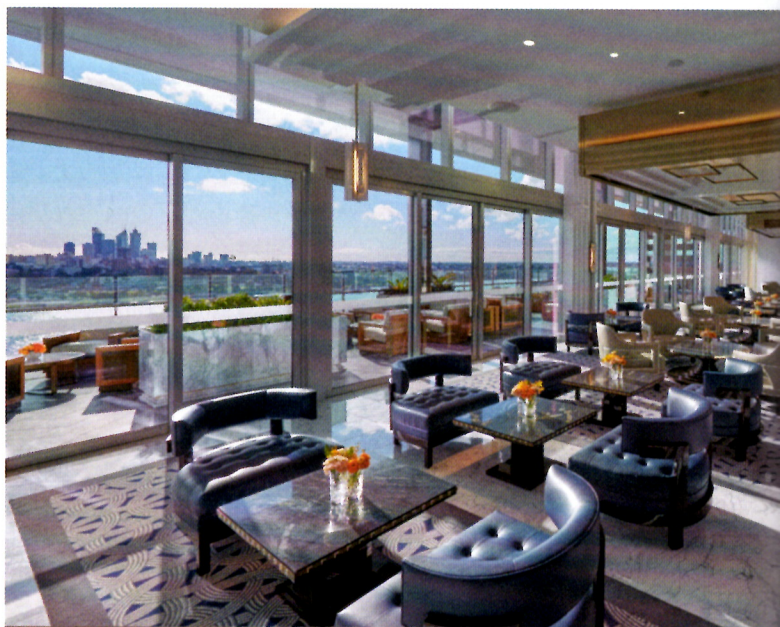
**A** pilgrimage to Perth has never been quite so auspicious. For many years, at least from the perspective of snooty east coasters, Australia's most remote capital city was considered a lacklustre mining town. That cavalier assessment can no longer be supported. Blessed with a majestic river, sylvan parks and bottle-green beaches, the Western Australia metropolis has lately been enhanced by sleek hotels, inventive restaurants and captivating neighbourhoods.

Few developments embody the city's newly polished status as does Crown Towers Perth. The hotel, opened last December as the third addition to the casino complex in Burswood, is arresting inside and out. Soaring ceilings, elaborate chandeliers and vibrant furnishings convey the impression of a gilded property in Dubai. From the multi-tiered pool to the multi-level penthouse, it's a splashy conceit. A restaurant fronted by a big-name chef is in the offing. In the meantime, guests dine at the hotel's Epicurean restaurant. Or stroll next door to the Crown Metropolis for Rockpool, Bistro Guillaume and other culinary attractions.

Crown Towers Perth cost more than \$600 million and required three design firms to execute: architects Bates Smart, interior architect Michael Fiebrich and interior designer Blainey North. North was responsible for the luminous 15th-floor lounge, the Crystal Club. And also the spa with its marble showers, gold-tiled vitality pools and La Prairie treatment rooms. I had the men's zone to myself for an afternoon of pampering, including a hot-stone massage that rocked my world. Fiebrich, for his part, has crafted 500 spacious guestrooms with tablets that control the lighting, shades and temperature from your bed. Handsome touches include limestone showers, tufted chaises and hexagonal mirrors.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the Swan River, is another landmark hotel. COMO The Treasury, which arrived in 2015, has elicited global acclaim for its serene ambience, solicitous service and 48 cossetting rooms. A trio of colonial-era buildings on St Georges Terrace have been adroitly integrated and exactly updated by architect Kerry Hill. My heritage room featured travertine vanities, towering French doors and an inviting balcony overlooking Cathedral Square and the new City of Perth library, also hatched by Hill. The hotel shares its location with a cluster of appealing eateries, including Wildflower and Post, bars, and stores offering everything from hand-made chocolates to demi-couture.

Minutes from the COMO is Elizabeth Quay, the burgeoning waterfront precinct that's already hosted cultural and culinary happenings, including the Night Noodle Markets. Also nearby is Brookfield Place, a glistening office hub with dining attractions such as Print Hall. Northbridge, the erstwhile gritty hood, now teems with spirited bars and restaurants. Evolving projects, including a sports stadium, an extensive train line and a cutting-edge museum, will no doubt further enrich the city. Even Perth's status as a far-flung destination is changing. Next year, Qantas will offer non-stop flights from London. Cue the Perth-quake. – *George Epaminondas*







**CLOCKWISE:** one of the COMO's serene suites; the old postal hall at COMO The Treasury; Jed Gerrard's Wildflower restaurant; the open and airy Post restaurant. **OPPOSITE (clockwise from top):** the reception area of the luxe spa at Crown Towers Perth; exterior of the multimillion-dollar property; Crown's Crystal Club lounge; a handsome suite at the Crown with views of the Swan River and the Perth skyline; detail of the lobby bar with its vibrant furnishings.



A new generation of talent is cooking up a storm in Perth, including WA-born **Jed Gerrard** (above), the executive chef of Wildflower, a fine-dining restaurant in the State Buildings. **Lindy Alexander** met Gerrard to talk about Wildflower and the burgeoning Perth dining scene.

Growing up in a little town in the west, Gerrard spent his childhood herring fishing, foraging for mushrooms, picking wild berries and catching marron in dams. He now draws on his early years, as well as his time at Bilson's Restaurant and Black by Ezard, to create a truly West Australian cuisine. "I want guests to come into Wildflower and know exactly where in the world they are and what time of year it is."

The philosophy behind Wildflower is based on the six seasons of the indigenous Noongar calendar. "The Noongar people from southwest Western Australia let nature guide them to what was available," explains Gerrard.

His favourite native ingredient is Geraldton wax. "The leaves taste like lime, lemongrass and banana," says Gerrard, who makes sherbet from the leaves and serves it with passionfruit and Geraldton wax sorbet with wattleseed ice cream.

So what does the chef like to eat and drink when off duty? "I tend to go casual," he says. "I want something 'no fuss', so I can relax!" Read on for his picks.



## 1 SHORE THING

Go for the view, stay for the food at **The Shorehouse** (278 Marine Parade, Swanbourne; shorehouse.com.au). "It's a great place to chill out," says Gerrard. "You can watch the sun set over the ocean, have some seafood and nice wine – it's just beautiful." While it's hard to beat sitting under the striped umbrellas on a sunny day, when the weather turns, it's time to head indoors. "When it's blowing a gale, I make a Tuscan bean soup with hearty, local ingredients," says head chef Ollie Gould. And the best spot to sup Gould's soup is fireside.

## 2 FREO FAIRY TALE

At the warm heart of Fremantle's **Bread in Common** (43 Pakenham St; breadincommon.com.au) are two wood-fired ovens. "We've called them Hansel and Gretel," grins executive chef Scott Brannigan. Though laying a breadcrumb trail would be a waste of the outstanding sourdough, which comes from a long ferment and slow mixing.

Brannigan's farm-to-table philosophy is on full view in the abundant vegetable beds and on the shelves lined with enormous jars brimming with pickles, ferments and preserves. "We make 95 per cent of everything in-house," he says. "It's an absolute labour of love."

The restaurant is equal parts cavernous and inviting, with its loops of dangling

lights, banquettes and shared tables. While the drinks list is small, it's punchy and highlights local and international offerings. And for those who don't fancy the hard stuff, there are always sodas featuring seasonal syrups such as blood orange, ginger and mint.

## 3 FRESH APPEAL

The clean lines, blond timber and brass fittings of **Nic and Kolo** (45 Ardross St, Applecross; nicandkolo.com.au) hint at owner Ben Kon-Yu's desire to deliver the holy trinity of top-class coffee, food and design. "It's an innovative cafe serving great food and coffee," says Gerrard. "The head chef, Nick Trezise, is taking his background in fine dining and making it more approachable, so it has more technique behind it than your average cafe." Locals love Nick's approach, especially the buttermilk pancakes with slab bacon, caramel creme and viola.

## 4 FILL'ER UP

Once a nut roasting factory, then a garage, **Gordon St Garage** (16 Gordon St, West Perth; gsgarage.com.au) is now a cafe, restaurant and wine bar. The change suits the roomy premises, although its original signage, industrial light fittings and exposed pipes pay homage to its past. The menu has an Italian bent, featuring house-made pastas and wood-fired pizzas.

Brunch includes French toast served with blueberries, house ricotta and mint. Gerrard likes to drop in for a short macchiato. "They roast beautiful, ethically sourced, single-origin coffee on site," he says.

## 5 SWEET DREAMS

Self-taught bakers Seren and Ryan Chu have created quite the buzz at **Chu Bakery** (498 William St, Highgate; [08] 9328 4740). "It's a must-visit," says Gerrard. "They do a really good Boston doughnut and a beautiful whipped feta with smashed avo and sriracha on their own bread. But you've got to get there early because they sell out." The crowd regularly spills out onto the footpath, but the pastries are worth the wait. The matcha chu puff, choux pastry filled with Chantilly cream and yuzu jelly, is a firm favourite.

## 6 STREETS AHEAD

Visually heavy, with its concrete and tile floor, exposed brick and murals by Thai street artist Alex Face, **Long Chim** (State Buildings, Barrack St & St Georges Tce; longchimperth.com) packs a punch. And that's before you get to the food, which is as authentic and pungent as you'd hope. "It's an awesome place to go and have a meal," says Gerrard. "It's Thai street food at its best, with a grungy, hipster vibe."

Wildflower celebrates indigenous WA ingredients in the calmest of green surrounds. **OPPOSITE** (clockwise from top right): when the wind blows, head indoors at The Shorehouse; Nic and Kolo; (inset) Bread in Common; coffee to go at Gordon St Garage; the restaurant pays homage to its industrial past; hit Long Chim for Thai street food; bakers Ryan and Seren Chu; their matcha chu puff.







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## 7 CHOCOLATE HIT

"Chocolate is a beautiful thing to work with; it's so tactile," says Sue Lewis, of **Sue Lewis Chocolatier** (Cnr St. Georges Tce & Barrack St; [suelewischocolatier.com.au](http://suelewischocolatier.com.au)). Lewis infuses the seasons into her delicate creations and makes heroes of indigenous flavours. "She does an amazing lemon myrtle truffle," says Gerrard. Guests staying upstairs at **COMO The Treasury** will find Lewis' chocolates on their pillow.

## 8 WHISKY BUSINESS

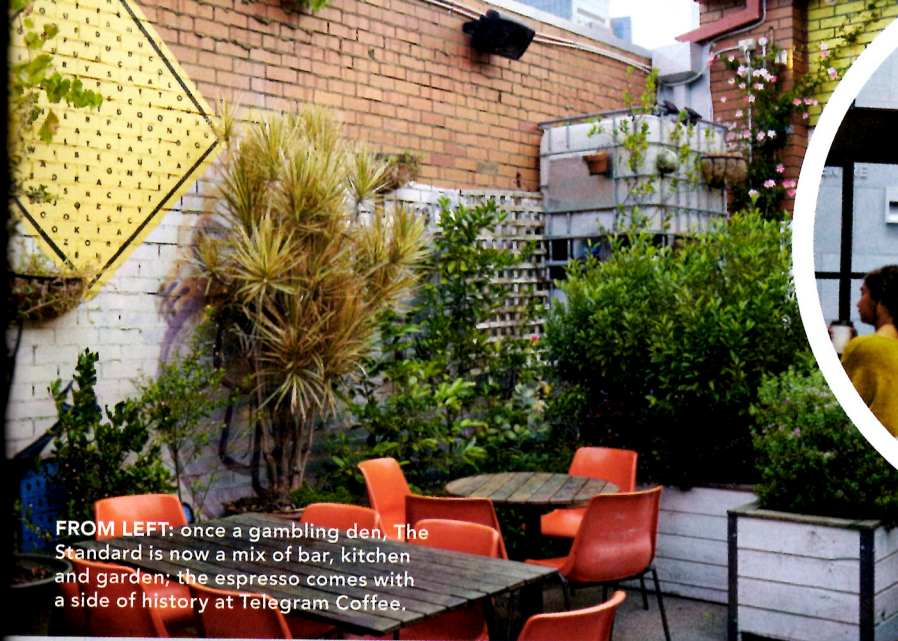
Andy Freeman does not do things by halves. The opening playlist for his subterranean whisky bar, **Varnish on King** (75 King St; [varnishonking.com](http://varnishonking.com)), took a year to put together. "I'm a firm believer in every pillar having equal importance," he says. "And even though we are a bar, the food was never going to be sausage rolls and popcorn." The most popular element of the menu is undoubtedly the grilled-to-order bacon flight. "It's this cool bacon tasting platter where four styles of pork are matched with whisky," says Gerrard.



**CLOCKWISE:** take on 'Rocky' at Alfred's Pizzeria; search out Francaforte Spaghetti Bar for great pasta; bacon and whisky pair up at Varnish on King; Sue Lewis Chocolatier hits the sweet spot; the design-heavy Alex Hotel. **RIGHT:** Propeller, nautical but nice.







FROM LEFT: once a gambling den, The Standard is now a mix of bar, kitchen and garden; the espresso comes with a side of history at Telegram Coffee.



## 9 KNOCKOUT PIZZA

Don't blink or you'll miss **Alfred's Pizzeria** (37 Barrack St; [alfredspizzeria.com.au](http://alfredspizzeria.com.au)). Head down steep steps to emerge in an American-style pizza parlour, with gingham tablecloths, clippings of the *New York Times* as wallpaper and rock and roll music playing. "It's such a cool place," says Gerrard. "We chefs go there after work for a few drinks and pizza." Gerrard's choice – Italian sausage, pepperoni, chilli and basil, known as 'Rocky' – is the menu's most popular. "Each week we wait and see what will knock Rocky off the top perch," says manager Jill Kady. "But so far nothing has."

## 10 EUROPEAN INSPIRATION

Julian Staltari was drifting along as a perennial student before he had a lightbulb moment while travelling. "I saw a little spaghetti place in Germany and loved it," he says. Named after the Italian for Frankfurt, **Francoforte Spaghetti Bar** (4/189 William St, Northbridge; [francoforte.com.au](http://francoforte.com.au)).

com.au) was opened soon after Staltari's epiphany. Tucked in a retro arcade, the tiny venue does a roaring trade with its small but focused menu. "It's a cool little place," says Gerrard. "It's BYO, so I take a bottle of cab sav and have some great pasta."

## 11 DEN OF LIQUIDITY

An old gambling den has been transformed into **The Standard** (28 Roe St, Northbridge; [thestandardperth.com.au](http://thestandardperth.com.au)). It's a welcoming and laid-back combination of bar, kitchen and garden. "We call it a wine garden, not a beer garden," says owner John Parker. Gerrard is a fan of the 'Elder Fashion' – a delicate version of an Old Fashioned featuring vodka, elderflower, coconut syrup and tiki bitters.

## 12 COOL DIGS

Walking into the **Alex Hotel** (50 James St, Northbridge; [alexhotel.com.au](http://alexhotel.com.au)), past colourful Lekker bikes, you could be forgiven for thinking you're in Copenhagen. Communal experiences are encouraged

here – grab a bottle of red from the honesty bar and head to the rooftop, or linger over complimentary freshly baked goodies and house-made granola at breakfast. Rooms range from petite to those with a private balcony, but all are beautifully appointed and guaranteed to cause a serious case of design-envy.

## 13 AHoy THERE

A cobalt-blue shipping container and ropes of lights set a nautical tone at **Propeller** (222 Queen Victoria St, North Fremantle; [propellernorthfrem.com.au](http://propellernorthfrem.com.au)). With two courtyards and a comprehensive menu featuring flavours from the Levant region, life has been breathed back into this old bus depot. "I like to go on my day off and have brunch," says Gerrard. "It's simple food with beautiful flavours."

## 14 OUT OF THE BOX

Tucked into the State Buildings is a striking wooden box, home to Luke Arnold's **Telegram Coffee** (28 Barrack St; [telegramcoffee.com.au](http://telegramcoffee.com.au)), says Gerrard. Each morning, Arnold opens the custom-made box by turning a 140-year-old crank wheel, reclaimed from the Old Treasury building. "We are based where the first general post office in Perth was located," he says. "Telegrams came from all over the world, and our coffee is sourced from all over the world." ✂



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