

ESPRESSO



Larissa Dubecki

The inside stories from

Becco pair reunited

Almost two years after selling out of the sophisticated city laneway Italian restaurant Becco, Richard Lodge is back, teaming up with Becco's founding chef Marco Lori to open what he describes as "a simple Italian wine bar" at the top end of Little Collins Street next door to Bar Lourinha. The 60-seat venue will be determinedly rustic: all-day dining, no bookings, a pasta-focused menu and a short but sweet Oz/Italian wine list. Lori opened Heidelberg's Cafe Matto in 2005 then sold out a year later; more recently he's been at Northcote's Cafe Bedda. Their as-yet unnamed project is slated for a mid-year opening.

Busy bees at Ladro

SOME very hip urban bees have taken up residence on the roof of Ladro, but they were definitely invited. The two Ladros — in Prahran and Fitzroy — have become the first Melbourne restaurants to follow the slow-food trend of rooftop beekeeping (they are in good company, as other participants include Buckingham Palace and the Paris Opera House). Any honey not used in the Ladro kitchens will be given away or sold; some will go back to



urban beekeeping project Melbourne City Rooftop Honey, which will be tending the bees.

Teetering on the edge

GEELONG'S waterfront showpiece, the Edgewater development, has been declared a "financial ruin" by the *Geelong Advertiser*, which reported last week that the complex is in liquidation, owing millions of dollars, and is at risk of being deserted as traders threaten to walk over claims of exorbitant rents and flooding. Edge Bar co-owner Darren Holroyd told the *Advertiser* the rents were at the "upper end" and kept pace with Melbourne



prices: "It was to be a magnificent building but it never came to fruition. The concept is great but it has been a disaster." Early casualties include a deli, now closed, and Base Eatery, which closed owing a string of debts and has now been reopened by a new trader as Waterfront Seafood. Potential buyers of Edgewater should take note: traders have warned that most fittings won't be part of the deal because they had to install doors, air-conditioning, windows and power-points at their own expense.

Room for Raynor?

PAUL Raynor (right) is keeping schtum about rumours he is about to be the proud new owner of the Melbourne Wine Room (Espresso, November 16). But he won't dispute that he finally owns the Baths outright after finalising negotiations with Elias Dannaoui, former lease-holder and operator of the then Middle Brighton Baths. Since taking over two years ago, Raynor has been sub-leasing the business from Dannaoui; the latest development means he can free up money for a



refurbishment, including additions such as a deck. You are likely to see Raynor on the floor more often these days — he is trying to get a feel for the business from the ground up, leaving Darren Mercaldi (ex-Balzari) in charge of the restaurant, and Tim Fox (most recently at Punch Lane) running the ground-floor cafe. As for the rest, we will have to wait and see.