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Five local heroes

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- **The Age Good Cafe Guide 2011 will be available for one day at \$5 with the purchase of The Saturday Age on June 18. For more see theageshop.com.au/cafe**

Advertisement

1. Omar & the Marvellous Coffee Bird, Gardenvale

Even the decor screams it: this place is all about coffee. The fitout is so stripped back you wonder if you've strayed into the storeroom: pale wood, tables on rails so they can glide, produce stacked on shelves in the open kitchen, the roasting machine tucked in a corner. A simple menu featuring Noisette bakery breads takes a back seat to the coffee, preferably the single-origin of the day (don't ask for it with milk).

124 Gardenvale Road, 9596 4186

www.coffeebird.com.au

Mon–Fri 6am–4pm; Sat–Sun 7am–4pm

2. Miss Marie, Rosanna

Locals flock here not just because there's little else around – with delicious all-day breakfasts, an art-filled, family-friendly vibe and superb coffee, Miss Marie could mix it and match it with the inner-city's best. The coffee is a delight: silky, medium-bodied with a rich, dark cherry flavour and a spicy aroma. A steak sanga is singing with a succulent piece of scotch fillet, Luke's onion jam and aioli.

45 Beetham Parade, no phone

www.missmariecafe.com.au

Mon–Fri 7.30am–4pm; Sat–Sun 8am–4pm

3. Bent Espresso, Bentleigh

This devil-cute little cafe, doing its thing down a side street between the station and the supermarket, is a cosy retreat from the daily grind. It's got retro red vinyl seating, a cabinet of cookies, a menu of quality all-day breakfasts and fabulous salads (confit salmon nicoise, perhaps?) and focaccias for lunch. The sensational Atomica coffee is brewed rich, round and chocolatey, a real velvet glove of a drop.

Shop 2, 385 Centre Road (off Bent Street), 9577 1339

Mon–Fri 7.30am–3pm; Sat–Sun 8am–3pm

4. Roller Door, West Melbourne

Gritty West Melbourne has been a certified dead-zone for decent cafes ... until now. The boys running this pint-

sized converted shed welcome locals and commuters from nearby North Melbourne station with their brief, sustainable menu and real-deal coffees. Breakfast includes organic granola with biodynamic yoghurt, while lunch is a short but snappy range of mostly organic sandwiches and focaccias. The coffee is a dark roast, with a full, creamy mouth-feel, earthy and spicy.

13 Stawell Street, 0449 208 681

Mon–Fri 7am–3pm; Sat–Sun 8am–3pm

5. Willim Espresso, Malvern

This tight squeeze off Glenferrie is for serious java nuts. There are various fixes: the house blend of Brazil, PNG and Bali beans with a chocolatey, medium body and smooth aftertaste; a softly acidic Ethiopian and Costa Rican espresso with hints of blueberry and lemon; and a rotating single-origin espresso (say, Colombia Monserrate with notes of syrup, cocoa and apple acidity). Then there's single-origin filter and a Swiss water process decaf. Bites tread the piadina, pastries and daily salad path.

90 Union Street, 9509 8506

www.willim.com.au

Mon–Sat 7am–5.30pm; Sun 8am–5.30pm

Sneak peek: The Age Good Cafe Guide 2011 cup winners

* 3 cups (the best coffee and great food in a special setting; in some cases, the best coffee but limited food)

Auction Rooms, Brother Baba Budan, Chez Dre, Dancing Goat, De Clieu, Dead Man Espresso, The Duchess of Spotswood, Market Lane Coffee, Miss Jackson, Pope Joan, Proud Mary, Seven Seeds, St Ali, Three Bags Full

* 2 cups (excellent coffee and food, or just excellent coffee, in a special setting)

Atomica, Brunswick East Project, Cafe Park Lane, Campos Coffee, Demi Tasse, Di Bella Coffee Roasting Warehouse, Dr Jekyll, Dukes Coffee Roasters, The Final Step, The Hardware Societé, Kinfolk, The League of Honest Coffee, Monk Bodhi Dharma, Nabihah, Omar & the Marvellous Coffee Bird, Penny Farthing Espresso, Pillar of Salt, The Premises, Wide Open Road

* 1 cup (very good coffee and food)

A Minor Place, Apte, Balderdash, Batch Espresso, The Bell Jar, Blossom Espresso, Bluebird Espresso, Boundary Espresso, Cafe Gaia, Cafe Odo, Cafe Rosamond, Cafe Vue, Cavallero, Coffee Darling, Coin Laundry, The Corner Shop, Demitri's Feast, Elevenses Espresso Bar, Espresso, Espresso 3121, Fandango, Felice's, Gingerlee, Gypsy Hideout, Il Fornaio, Jackson Dodds, Julio's, Kitschen Pantry, La Paloma, Las Chicas, Liaison, Liar Liar, The Little Mule, The Little Ox, The Maling Room, Manchester Press, Milkwood, Miss Marie, Mr Tulk, My Sister Says, New Day Rising, North Cafeteria, Outpost, Piano Piano, Piccolo Espresso, Porgie & Mr Jones, Pound, Q Eleven, Ray, Richmond Hill Cafe & Larder, Roller Door, Salford Lads Club, Set Shot, Snow Pony, Stellini Bar, Umberto Espresso Bar, Willim Espresso Bar

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