



**ON THE MENU**

## Timaru and Geraldine

If you like to sip and sup with a side order of history, then get yourself to this Canterbury city and charming boutique town.

BY CATHERINE MCGREGOR

### Eat

**SAIKOU**

On a blustery midweek evening, Saikou is humming. But that's no surprise – the Bay Hill, Timaru restaurant, now in the hands of enthusiastic young couple Ola Latu and Jacob Stonehouse, has long been the go-to place for Asian bites accompanied by great cocktails. The teppanyaki-style menu is heavy on Japanese favourites like gyoza, yaki soba and sushi – their miso-glazed salmon skewers are justly famous – but you'll also find Korean flavours such as kimchi sneaking in. The Asian influence carries over onto the drinks list, which

finds new ways with sake, lychee liqueur and togarashi-infused syrup. [saikoutwb.co.nz](http://saikoutwb.co.nz)

**THE OXFORD**

Few dining experiences can beat a bistro that gets things right, and Clarissa and Mike Doran's place The Oxford is certainly one of those. Housed in a heritage-listed building complete with soaring, pressed-tin ceilings, this is the sort of restaurant that welcomes you the same whether you're there for a three-course meal or just a plate of cheese and something from the extensive wine list. Beneath a giant photo of Miss Caroline Bay 1965 striking a pose – a nod to this town's long history as a summer seaside destination – diners dig into comforting classics: chicken schnitzel, beef and ale pie or seared wild venison, with an affogato or brulee to finish. So good, you'll be tempted to come back for weekend brunch. [theoxford.co.nz](http://theoxford.co.nz)

**STREET FOOD KITCHEN**

If you're looking for the birthplace of modern Timaru, you'll find it at the Landing Service Building. It was on this site that the town's first European cottage was built circa 1851; the two-storey bluestone building you see now came next, housing boats for



ferrying goods and people from the ships anchored in the bay. A conference venue, Speight's Ale House and Te Ana Ngāi Tahu Māori Rock Art centre now call the building home, along with Street Food Kitchen, a fun eatery celebrating street eats from across the globe. Chinese bao, Mexican fish tacos, Spanish crab empanadas, Japanese karaage chicken: order a selection, and eat your way around the world in 80 minutes – or more, if you stay on for a cocktail. [streetfoodkitchen.co.nz](http://streetfoodkitchen.co.nz)

**THE RUNNING DUCK**

A half-hour northwest of Timaru in the charming town of Geraldine, Al and Anna Bolland's The Running Duck is the ideal lunchtime stop for both hungry daytrippers and those on the road from Christchurch to Lake Takapō. Outside, hints of the garage it once was are still visible, with picnic tables arrayed around the old forecourt. Inside, diners sit at tables surrounded by shelves of vintage radios, mid-century kitchen goods and the odd ukulele – “upcycled kiwiana”, Anna calls it. The menu is New Zealand snack bar meets American diner, featuring gourmet milkshakes, elevated cheese toasties and a range of excellent burgers garnished with their own home-smoked bacon. Don't leave without a bottle from Al's cult-favourite hot sauce range, made in Geraldine and sold under his Al's Laboratory brand. [therunningduck.co.nz](http://therunningduck.co.nz)



Diners sit at tables surrounded by shelves of vintage radios, mid-century kitchen goods and the odd ukulele.



1. Bartender Grant Hullen at Street Food Kitchen. 2. A relaxed eatery by day, Street Food Kitchen becomes a restaurant and cocktail bar at night. 3. Chef Mike Doran at The Oxford. 4, 5. Sample Asian-fusion meals made to share at Saikou. 6. A burger with house-made smoked bacon and Al's Laboratory hot sauce. 7. Laid-back Kiwi bach vibes at the Running Duck, Geraldine.





8, 9. Say cheers to bartender Kristal Russell at dog-friendly Hector Black's. 10. Sample Andrew Lewis' gin at Humdinger. 11. Grab a wedge at the Geraldine Cheese Company.



## Drink

### HECTOR BLACK'S

This bar isn't just unique to Timaru, it's surely one of the most idiosyncratic drinking spots in the entire country. The cavernous 1870 National Bank of New Zealand has been reimaged as a bizarre gentlemen's club, filled with an extraordinary collection of antiques and collectibles from South Canterbury and abroad. You'll spend the first 10 minutes perusing the decor, including, frozen in a glass case, the bar's namesake – owner Tim Black's late Jack Russell terrier, Hector. (Fair warning to animal lovers: this bar finds room for rather a lot of taxidermy). There's always a good selection of craft beer on tap, but don't pass up the opportunity to try something hoppy from the city's only microbrewery, Ship Hop. In the mood for a mixed drink? Order a cocktail – ideally one with gin from Humdinger up the road in Geraldine – relax into a leather Chesterfield, and get ready to stay a while.

## Shop

### HUMDINGER

Small-batch gin is having a moment right now, and Geraldine's Humdinger distillery is leading the way. Their signature gins are a London dry and a bright and moreish citrus gin; a handful of limited release barrel-aged gins are also for sale at their Talbot Street cellar door. Owners Andrew and Saskia Lewis have a background in cheese production, an industry with a lot of similarities to distilling, and say their move into boutique gin two years ago could



hardly have gone better. Already their gins have won awards, both here and at the London Spirits Competition. Meanwhile the annual release of their sloe gin, made with sloes grown on Saskia's parents' land just outside of town, is hotly anticipated by those in the know – the 2022 edition is due any day now. [humdinger.nz](http://humdinger.nz)

### GERALDINE CHEESE COMPANY

The town's biggest culinary claim to fame is as the home of Barker's fruit products, and what better accompaniment to a chutney or relish from that local institution than a selection of cheese from the Geraldine Cheese Company? Founded by cheese-making veterans Angela Veale and Paul Fitzsimons, the company



produces and sells a superb range of artisan cheese at its delicatessen/factory (the two are connected by large windows through which deli customers can see all the factory action). Their cheeses are proudly local, named after nearby landmarks and made with milk from South Canterbury farms. Come here for the brie, havarti and cheddar – their 12-year-old cheddar will knock your socks off – plus superb sheep, goat and deer (yes, deer) cheeses. Next door, the couple is preparing to open Geraldine's first microbrewery with, unsurprisingly, a very cheese-focused snack menu. 🍷

*Air New Zealand operates daily non-stop flights to Timaru from Wellington, with connections across the domestic network.*