

# Why Geelong's Dining Scene Is Finally Growing

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La Cachette

by [Sangeeta Kocharekar](#)

The dining scene in Geelong used to be thought of as behind the times, with residents heading to Melbourne instead to get their foodie fix. This is according to Paul Upham, who grew up in Geelong and, after moving away, returned in 2015 to buy the [Lorne Hotel](#) with his dad.

Upon returning, Upham became inspired to create a greater food scene in Geelong. In 2021, he and his dad sold the Lorne Hotel and he set up the Geelong Restaurant Group, which now consists of [Sawyers Arms Tavern](#), focused on gastropub food, and [Two Noble](#), a modern Asian-fusion restaurant.

“Geelong has seen great chefs move into the region,” Upham says. “Aaron Turner (chef and restaurateur) was probably the first to come to Geelong with [Igñi](#). Matt Germanchis (chef and restaurateur, formerly at Melbourne restaurants MoVida and Pei Modern), then took over the Captain Moonlite.



Image: Two Noble

“Now we have local chefs learning their trade elsewhere and then coming back, like Chef Matt Podbury at [La Cachette](#).”

Greg O’Shea, owner of hotel [Quest Geelong Central](#), which opened in September 2023, attributes Geelong’s growing dining scene to its location relative to Melbourne — it’s a 60-minute drive away. Geelong is close enough to benefit from the big city’s economic and cultural influence, but still able to maintain its country feel.

“Geelong’s dining scene has flourished, offering diverse cuisines catering to various budgets and emphasising quality and locally sourced ingredients,” O’Shea says. “Key areas like Little Malop Street and the Waterfront have been hubs, complemented by the emergence of high-profile restaurants in the CBD.”

Notable restaurants include [Felix](#), [Alma](#) and [Emerge](#). The first regional outpost of [Chin Chin](#) was also announced this month to open in Geelong at the GMHBA Stadium — though just as a pop-up. Its founder Chris Lucas grew up in the regional city, with his dad running pubs and cafés there in the 1960s and ‘70s.



Image: Felix

“I can’t tell you how many people have asked me why I haven’t opened a restaurant in Geelong,” Chin Chin’s founder Chris Lucas told [Broadsheet](#).

Upham’s [Two Noble](#), which opened in Geelong in August 2023, features a lantern-covered ceiling, marble bar and parquet flooring. He describes it as fine dining with a casual feel. Its signature dishes are bass strait scallops, hiramasa kingfish and roasted duck.

O’Shea’s favourite area to dine in Geelong is at the Waterfront, which he says offers a range of food options, most with a side of Corio Bay views. The precinct is also home to walking and cycling paths and landscaped gardens.

“The Bellarine Peninsula is, of course, a must-do to experience the beautiful wines and artisan producers of the Geelong region,” he says.

Upham’s favourite spots are Songbird, The Arborist and La Cachette. He predicts more great restaurants will continue to open in Geelong. O’Shea echoes the prediction.

“Key Melbourne culinary icons will also see Geelong as an option for their business diversification and growth,” O’Shea says. “Adrian Richardson and the Lucas Group have already formed relationships in Geelong. More higher-end restaurants will appear in line with the development of the new Convention Centre and Cunningham Place in 2026.”