

Road trips, road kill and real food



It started before 7am.

I'm somewhat of a slovenly beast at the best of times, let alone when I'm forced from my slumber in the wee hours on my day off.

Yes, that's right. Seven AM is 'early' for this 'ere heathen. It wasn't all that long ago where I was more likely to get into bed at 7am than get out of it.

But on this particular morning I had good reason to be eagerly beaverlicious – the countryside beckoned.

Any opportunity to veer off the frenetic fast lanes of Sin City for the countryside's sweet caress is always welcome in my book.

With a hankering for real food and a boot full of whim and wonder, my Girl Friday and I made a quick coffee pitstop at her besty's, before hitting the tarmac and heading for the hills.

What is it about road trips that make you reminisce about family trips of yesteryear where a re-fuelling at McDonald's was mandatory?

A mouthful or two into our sausage-ish and egg muffburgers and it dawned on us that this little guilty pleasure delivered more guilt than pleasure.

Alas, a hole was filled, but some times memories are best left as just that.

As the tumbleweed rolled through Bathurst on Good Friday we aimlessly searched for the perfect country pie, but had to settle for a steak and chips at the GT Angus Bar and Grill that was as memorable as it was filling.

Road kill count: 9

Feeling a bit broken, beaten and scarred, we knew Orange promised something special so we got moving.

The Union Bank Wine Bar had a cracking wine list and top notch waitstaff who happily dished up a charcuterie plate filled with dinosaur-sized duck parfait, pork belly rillette and pork, pistachio and prune terrine.

Lolli Redini's delivered arguably the best service I've witnessed in a country restaurant and the food backed it up as we indulged in a six hour slow-braised wagyu brisket and a fig, quince and almond frangipane tart.

Slice of Orange brewed a bang-on morning coffee before we slammed down a big breakfast at Anson Teahouse & Eatery which was, well, big. But it was the ham, cheese and pineapple croissant which raised an eyebrow, encouraging me to ask if people ordered it.

The waitress laughed before replying "no, not really".

Sisters Rock's views over the Orange hinterland and feeds full of flavour forgave the ponderous portions obviously prepared for porky pigs.

While Bistro Ceello was on the money in every sense. The kitchen crew were as busy as a one-legged man in a butt kicking competition, but everything hit the mark. The venison pie with a white bean puree and roasted baby beets ticked the country pie box and soothed the soul in the process.

Departing Orange via Wellington, the quiet little town served as a caffeine re-fueling depot. The cafe was empty. A safe order of two small flat whites to the pimply teen who wrote it down on an invoice, checked our order, walked over to the wall, put the docket up on the wall, read it, then made his way over to the machine to make the order. Busy times in Wellington.

Road kill count: 16

Our final destination housed a cook who had a rep for taking no prisoners in the kitchen.

That's right, my mother.

The 21-year-old Weber was firing on all cylinders with a crackling pork loin stuffed, rolled and on its way to deliciousville. Together with roast veggies followed by home-made lemon meringue tart and a pavlova, we were officially in trouser button-popping territory.

Friday and I came to the decision to award her one Chef's Hat, and 'Best meal of the tour'. You can't beat a home-made roast with all the trimmings – and who'd dare deny their mother the honour?

Official road kill count: 22.5 (roughly)

Six hours, bumper, back to the thunder and lightning of Sin City demanded a remedy that the country seems unable to provide – a damn good dumpling smash.

A few baskets of xiao long bao courtesy of Ashfield's Shanghai Night induced the required 10-hour horizontal food coma one requires after long road trips.

The lucky country indeed.

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