

KYNETON \ PETER WILMOTH ANSWERS THE PIPER'S CALL

YOU CAN take kids to the most amazing places and there is a very good chance that later, on reflection, they will remember the simplest, cheapest activity. And that was probably what happened in Kyneton, where the open-air market in the middle of town (open every second Saturday) dazzled them. Was it the ute tray full of cages containing turkeys, geese, ducks and various other poultry? Was it the brass band playing *Amazing Grace*, followed rather incongruously by a rendition of the theme from *Hogan's Heroes*? Was it the finches and guinea pigs on sale? Or the jams and organic breads?

No, not a chance. That last one is my caper. I love a country market mainly because of the home-made jams. As in really home-made; as in made in someone's home. You can keep your knitted toys, your pre-loved Len Deighton novels and your tie-dye brunch coats, I head straight for the jam stand and stock up.

Kyneton is a lovely town. I wanted to come and visit again after hearing from a friend so much about what was happening food-wise in Piper Street. Much of the attention Piper Street attracts has been largely due to Annie Smithers, whose eponymous restaurant, **Annie Smithers Bistrot and Produce**, (72 Piper Street, 5422 2039) is one of the great drawcards of this town. But not the only one. There are some very good reasons to come to Kyneton, and some of them are about eating.

First, though, we had to check into our digs for our two-night visit. We stayed at **Mollisons** (116-118 Mollison Street; Deborah Myers, 0412 384 056), an elegant two-bedroom apartment-style accommodation in Kyneton's main street, just a short walk from Piper Street. With its white leather couches, cowhide rug and a balcony overlooking the street, it's an excellent place to base yourself to further explore the Macedon Ranges. There is a range of accommodation on offer, from one and two bedrooms. Prices range from the "Kings" room (\$270 per couple per night), to the "Queens" (\$230) to the apartment at \$520. Midweek packages are available. It's stylish and central, and an easy walk to Piper Street to eat.

Which is what we did first thing Saturday morning. Breakfast was at the **Little Swallow Café** (58a Piper Street, 5422 6241), a lovely little place that brought us excellent free-range scrambled eggs on toast and very good coffee. For lunch they do paninis, a pasta, a pork-and-veal meatballs dish and a chicken chasseur with mushrooms. Also there's a radicchio, witlof and walnut salad and spanakopita.

We stopped in at the delightful **Kyneton Museum** (67 Piper Street), where the kids dressed up as figures from the late 1800s (after a big week at work I didn't have to dress up like someone from the 1800s, I already felt like one). You can visit various rooms set up as it was when Kyneton was a thriving gold town. Tapes of imagined conversations from the era are played, lending the museum a living history feel. We asked nicely, so the woman at reception gave us a short and interesting verbal tour, including showing the kids the vault where they used to keep the gold.

Over the road is **Annie Smithers Bistrot**. We went in for a chat with Annie Smithers, We didn't stay for lunch, this time, but I've eaten here before and it is deserving of the chef's hat awarded by *The Age Good Food Guide 2011* (and the 15/20 it received). Annie tells us that up to 90 per cent of the vegetables used in the restaurant are from her kitchen garden at Malmsbury. The menu changes every day. (Oh, and Annie's charming; be sure to say hello when you have lunch or dinner there – they don't do breakfast or just coffee any more).

We had lunch at **Dhaba at the Mill Curry House** (Shop 3, 18 Piper Street, 5422 6225), an intriguing Indian restaurant where they play Bollywood movies



LITTLE SWALLOW CAFÉ



ANNIE SMITHERS BISTROT & PRODUCE



DAVID HANNAHY

DHABA AT THE MILL CURRY HOUSE

on a wall. All those amazing colours and dancing and action scenes – what a backdrop for your meal. Owner Jessi, a San Franciscan who settled three years ago in Kyneton with his family, shows us a game called "Carom", popular in "dhabas" or roadside eateries in India, in which you flick little pellets around. The kids loved it. The food was great – we had a tasty beef massala, a butter chicken, a mango lassi, and for dessert a rasmalai.

In the afternoon we dropped in on **Kabinett** (66 Piper Street, 5422 6695), a fascinating new and vintage homewares shop. Its owners source a lot of the product from Bulgaria, where they bought a house. There are wall maps, antique chairs, old fans, wooden shoe moulds, ladders, stuffed ducks and albatrosses and tricycles. Prepare to spend a lot of time in here. It's endlessly entertaining.

Dinner was at **Pizza Verde** (62 Piper Street, Kyneton, 5422 7400), a charming place with Laminex tables and a very casual atmosphere. It has a sort of cool St Kilda or Fitzroy feel to it and it is very family friendly. The stated aim of this family-run pizzeria is to produce the best-tasting pizza that is also good for you, using the best ingredients sourced as locally as possible. Everyone in the room seemed to be very happy to be dining there the evening we visited. I had an excellent antipasto and the kids had pizza. Recommended. \

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The kids loved it

FAST FACTS

- In the 1850s, Kyneton became the gateway to and supply centre of the flourishing Victorian gold fields.
- The town is 85 kilometres north-west of Melbourne on the Campaspe River and just off the Calder Highway. The population is about 4500.
- In spring the town hosts the annual Kyneton Daffodil and Arts Festival.

stay



MOLLISONS



(SUPPLIED)

shop



KABINETT



PIPER STREET

(SUPPLIED)