

THE GOOD LIFE FOOD & WINE

FIVE OF A KIND

MUESLI Virtuous early risers can revel in the most important meal of the day with these bountiful beginnings, writes **Michelle Griffin**.



REFINED

Bircher muesli, \$8.50

THE best cafe at Victoria Market serves the best bircher in town, a soft, creamy mouthful sweetened with fresh juice and studded with fat sultanas and crunchy pepitas. It comes with poached fruit, whatever is in season: maybe silky vanilla-poached nectarines, maybe quinces that yielded with the tang of spices. Add a scoop of lemony yoghurt and a cup of the best coffee in the market, and you're set for the day.

Coffea, 521 Elizabeth Street, West Melbourne, 9326 7388; Tues to Sat 7am-3pm, Sun 7am-2.30pm.

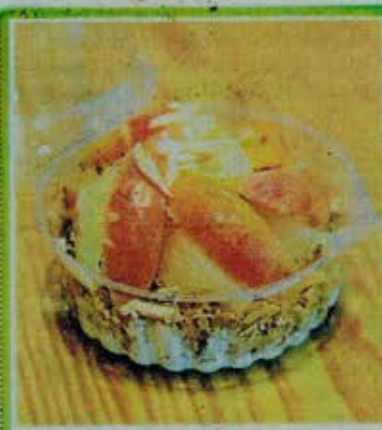


SWEET

Bircher muesli, \$10.50

FOR all its earnest health food reputation, bircher is mostly an excuse to have crumble for breakfast. This Hawthorn brekkie palace serves up a stylish muesli, sweetened with postcard-ready cinnamon pears, a swirl of honey in the dairy and a decent scatter of roasted pistachios. Or you could cut to the chase and have Porgie's autumn fruit crumble, scented with rosewater.

Porgie and Mr Jones, 291 Auburn Road, Hawthorn, 9882 2955; Mon to Fri 8am-4pm, Sat to Sun 8.30am-4pm.



TAKEAWAY

Bircher muesli, \$6.50

EATING breakfast al desko can be pretty depressing, but the muesli packs from this slick office-belt oasis can cheer up an early morning start while providing decent fuel for the hard eight (or nine or 10 hours) ahead. If eating in, it's ready made, the booths are cosy, and the coffee's fine. On the crunchy side, this muesli is boosted by slivers of almonds, spears of poached fruit and a decent slick of robust honey. It looks pretty too, the fruit arranged like a 1950s starburst clock.

SMXL, 542-544 Little Bourke Street, city, 9642 8611; Mon to Fri 7am-5pm.



GLAMOUR

Bircher muesli, \$9.50

AS the long queues down the street demonstrate, breakfast is the most important meal of the day at this big, busy enterprise, and the new breakfast menu backs it up with all sorts of high-concept dishes catering to every food need, from gluten-free to meat lovers. The bircher option gets a slightly exotic kick with a very mild seam of ginger, some grated apple, plenty of yoghurt and a dusting of panela — toffee-tasting South American cane sugar. Chase with the beaker of cold-press coffee.

Auction Rooms, 107 Errol Street, North Melbourne, 9326 7749; Mon to Fri 7am-5pm, Sat to Sun 7.30am-5pm.



HOMEY

Bircher muesli, \$8

THIS is a simple bowl of muesli sweetened with a berry compote and made cruisy by all the charming touches at this friendly neighbourhood joint: souvenir teaspoons with the coffee and menus pinned inside 1950s children's textbooks. Swipe a 1962 *New Idea* from the magazine rack and daydream yourself back to a gentler time when the cover star was a knitting pattern. Mind you, it's an alternative universe version of the 1960s: the breakfast scramble is tofu, the stay-at-home dad's ordering the babycino, and all the T-shirts and jewellery feature birds.

Pearl Oyster, 114 Miller Street, Preston, 9480 2500; Mon and Wed to Sat 8am-4.30pm, Sun 9am-4pm.