

Japanese Summer Festival

The [Japanese Summer Festival](#) is on at Federation Square next Sunday February 25 and along with all the traditional Taiko drumming, dancing, kimono and cosplay competitions you can experience some Japanese street food. A common street food in Japan is taiyaki, a fish-shaped type of waffle with green tea, custard, red bean or chocolate cream fillings. Takoyaki is another food that is cooked in dedicated iron moulds, this time as round balls of crispy batter filled with chopped octopus and spring onion or prawn. Look for the Zero Lam stand cooking these two dishes to order but be careful not to burn your tongue. Probably more familiar to most will be the yakatori, skewers of meat cooked over a charcoal fire. [Horse Bazaar](#) will be turning the skewers for the Japanese Summer Festival this year. [Shimbashi Japanese Soba Noodle and Sake Bar](#) will also have takoyaki in addition to their wonderful noodles. A classic street food for those with a hearty appetite is okonomiyaki. It might be difficult to get your tongue around this word but it means “grilled as you like it” and takes the form of a savory pancake layered with anything you want but typically okonomiyaki will have left over tempura bits, pork belly pieces, vegetables and lashings of Japanese mayo. Contrary to the usual Japanese approach of restraint with food this multi layered heart stopper is definitely one for the boys. You can wash all this down with some Japanese beer or cider.





Ovens Street Baker

I have been buying a very nice fruit loaf and sourdough bread from Senserrick Green Grocer recently. The bread comes from a baker that operates out of a small warehouse in an industrial street in the heart of Brunswick and aptly named Ovens Street. It is only open on Sundays, so I guess you could say it is more of a pop-up retail bakery, its main business being wholesale. Baker, Pip Hayes, was baker and part owner of the wonderful Wye River General Store; a great stopping off point for Great Ocean Road trekkers. Melbourne is fortunate to have this recent addition to our small but expanding group of artisan bakers but given we are a city of 4.8 million more of

these dedicated people are sorely needed. There are plans to open on Saturdays this year and hopefully expand the reach of their wonderful breads and pastries. Ovens Street has a wide variety of breads, including a light rye, seed loaf, white sourdough, croissants, tarts and Polish doughnuts. The fruit loaf is moist, fragrant and full of juicy chunks of fruit and is fantastic eaten fresh or toasted.



19 Ovens Street, Brunswick, 3056. Open Sunday. No website, facebook page or phone – this baker is too busy.

Bread also available Monday, Thursday and Saturday from [Senserrick Green Grocer](#), 687 Nicholson Street and 384 Rathdowne Street, North Carlton.

Do You Know The Muffin Man?

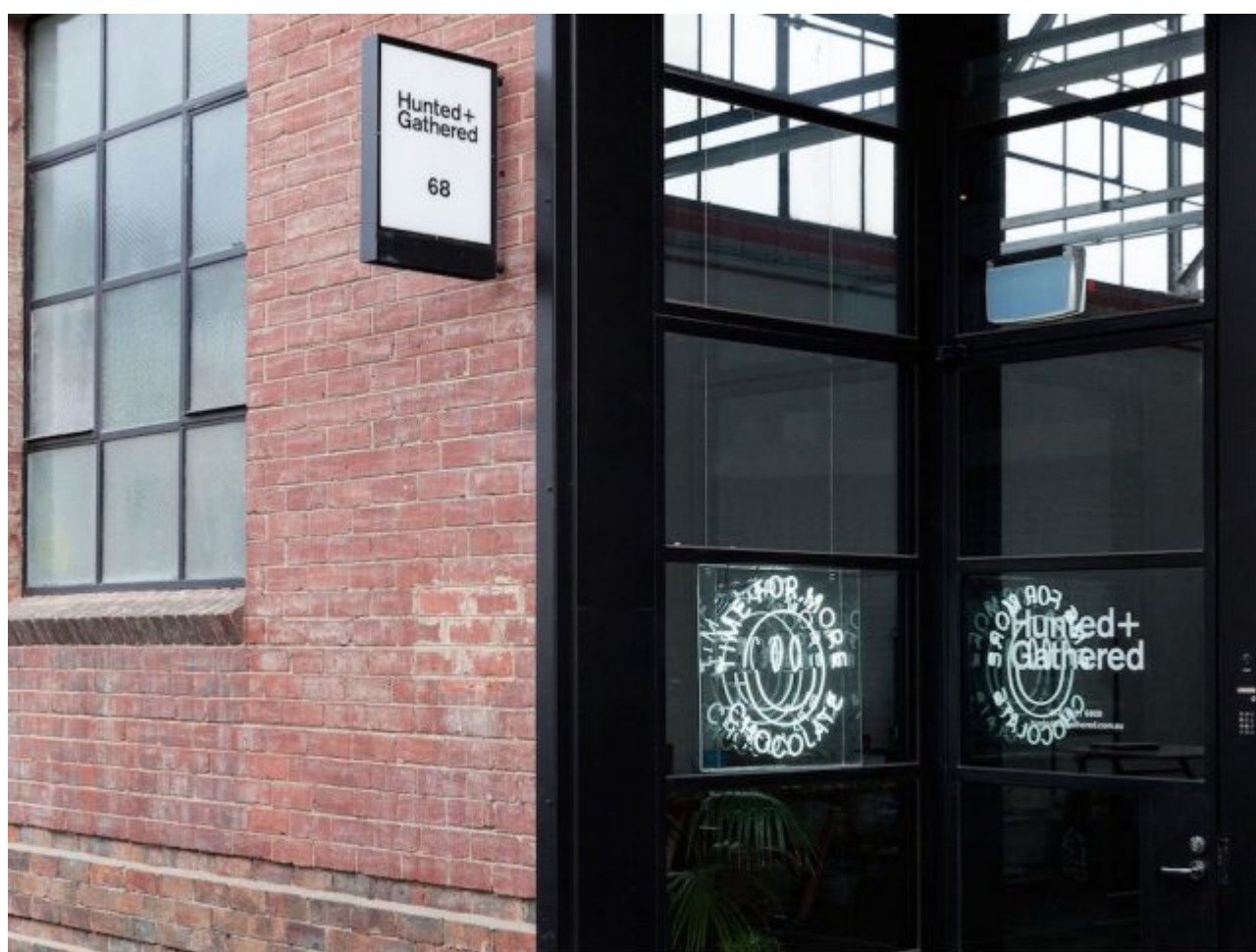
The muffin man, the muffin man. Do you know the muffin man, who lives on Drury Lane? He's a bit of a mystery; no website or Facebook page, just a few very old tweets and Instagram pics of his amazing handmade English muffins. I guess this baker, like many artisan bakers, is just too busy baking to keep up with demand to worry about marketing. If you manage to find these muffins at select grocers and cafes give them a try, they really are fantastic. While cheaper supermarket varieties have a weird taste that I have never liked, these are beautifully tender and delicious, with a dusting of crispy polenta and no added sugar. Lightly toast them and then smother in butter, honey, marmalade or jam or perhaps top with a poached egg; believe me there is no better way of starting the day.

Drury Lane English Muffins are available, if you are quick, at: Toscanos, Kew; Boccaccio IGA, Balwyn; Wild Things, Fitzroy North and Millstone Cafe and Patisserie, Malvern. Retail price \$10.

Hunted and Gathered For The Chocolate Connoisseur

Melbourne artisan chocolate makers, [Hunted + Gathered](#), produce some pretty sophisticated chocolate bars. Lovers of rich, dark, single origin chocolate will love the stunning, slightly savoury flavour of their fennel seed chocolate bar or be so intrigued by the salt and pepper bar as to feel like a pioneer in a totally new realm of chocolate enjoyment. The design

packaging and the look of the warehouse shop at 68 Gwynne Street, Cremorne gives the impression of a chocolate laboratory dedicated to scientific chocolate exploration. Flavours to try are coffee, macadamia nut and sesame seed and I am sure there are more intriguing flavours in the pipeline. The shop also has some minimal, Scandi looking cafe seating to enjoy chocolate related snacks and drinks. Hunted + Gathered chocolate bars are available from quality Melbourne food stores, including Blackhearts and Sparrows wine stores ([Hunted + Gathered stockists](#)).



Returnable Milk Bottles

[Schulz Organic Dairy](#) in Timboon are piloting the sale of their milk in returnable glass milk bottles and its a wonderful thing. I love the look, feel and taste of milk from a bottle. While there is no rational explanation for it, the milk seems colder and tastes even better than usual when I drink a glass of this prize winning milk from the bottle. While cartons and plastic can get recycled, a glass bottle not only gets reused but its continual circulation in the system means a reduction in the amount of milk containers overall. Once it reaches the end of a long life the glass can be recycled into something else or another milk bottle. With glass you get the three Rs; Reuse, Reduce and Recycle. This sustainable approach to consumption is common in Germany, where most supermarkets accept returnable milk and yoghurt containers and some even provide a vending machine for you to refill the bottle yourself if you wish. Schulz Organic Dairy are only trialing the glass bottles at farmers markets for now but hope to roll them out to retail stores early next year. It would be wonderful to see glass bottles take off again in Australia.