

# When Less Is More

Why is it so hard to buy a simple meal of quality ingredients in a cafe? Yesterday I ordered an eggplant and halloumi burger, seeing it as the best option on a meat laden, overly complex menu. I should have predicted the massive mound that came, which even after cutting it in half with a steak knife, was impossible to eat with cutlery and impossible to eat neatly with my hands. While it had fewer ingredients than a lot of other items on the menu it was still a confused mess. The eggplant, rather than lightly grilled tasted of a mix of gas flame and greasy hob, the halloumi was predictably congealed on top of mashed avocado mixed with cheap mayo, onion jam and who knows what else to up the umami stakes and all stacked high within a bun of mammoth proportions. Am I alone in thinking that these concoctions are a recipe for indigestion. The star of the dish should have been creamy, lightly grilled eggplant, enhanced with fresh herbs. It had me dreaming wistfully of Italy and plates of simple food. My lunch today took me three minutes to prepare; toast, buffalo mozzarella, prosciutto, rocket from the garden and a liberal drizzling of EV00. It was delicious and I doubt I would be able to step out into any local cafe in trendy inner Melbourne or the wealthy Eastern suburbs and buy it. Maybe Grossi Fiorentino would oblige if I was a regular. There was a time I frequently enjoyed slow roasted tomatoes with basil butter at a local restaurant which used to open for brunch. The chef took one ingredient, the tomato, and cooked it slowly to bring out the natural tangy sweetness and married it with its soul mate basil. I'd pay top dollar for that again.