

CITY SCENE

Soak up the buzz at a busy Italian cafe in the heart of the CBD

FOR more than five years, the D'Arienzo family has served up Italian fare based on recipes from their home in central Italy along the Adriatic coast.

The family's City cafe Pane e Vino boasts a large following and keeps brothers Gino and Tony and dad Ugo busy running the show while mum Irene makes the cafe's supply of pasta by hand.

The casual eatery has footpath dining down pat. An awning with roll-down plastic curtains shelters diners from the weather and a row of potted plants and canvas banners create a border along the road.

Inside, the large, split-level room has polished concrete floors. Pull up a mesh-lined metal chair at one of the many tables or sit pretty up at the bar. But when the sun shines, it's a rush to nab one of the coveted outside tables, perfect for watching the world go by.

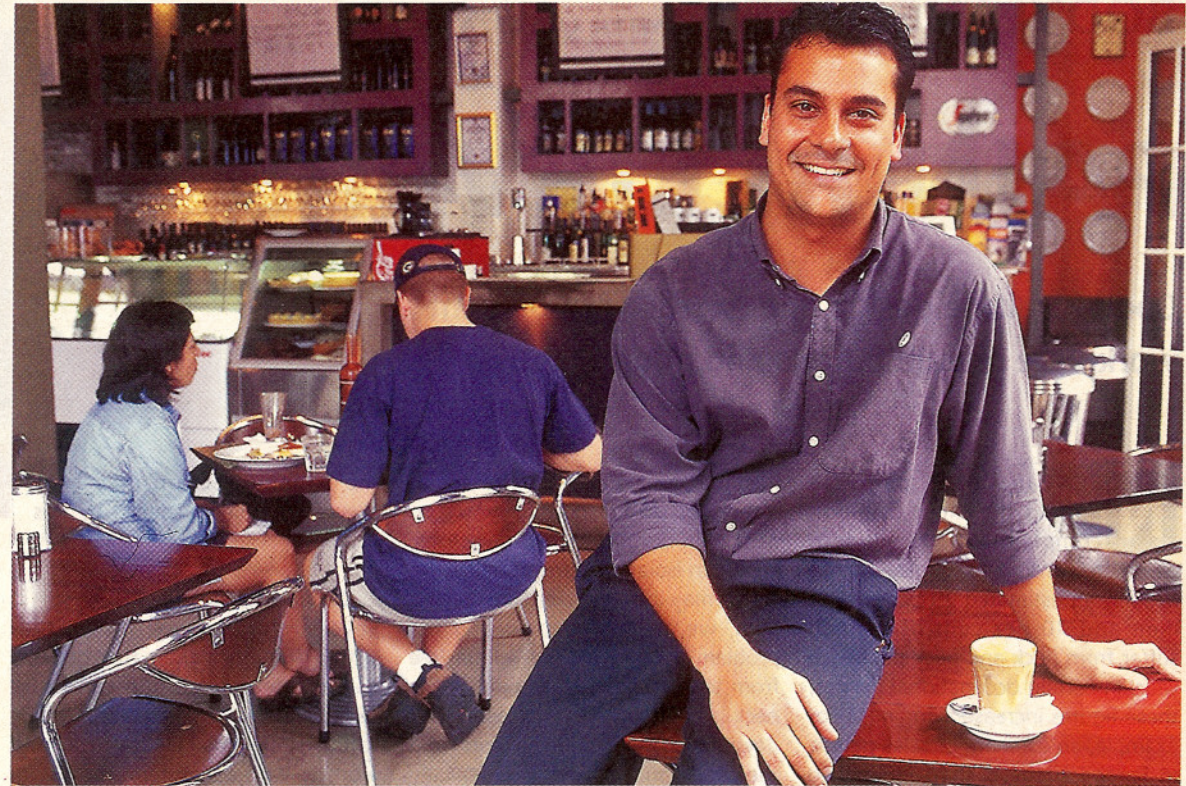
Pane e Vino serves up *colazione*

(Italian for breakfast) from 7.30am to 11.30am, daily. Breakfast doesn't reveal the same Italian-only focus as the rest of the menu but is reasonable, if not particularly interesting, all the same.

In the quest for good value, the Breakfast special (\$9.50) of roasted Roma tomatoes, a choice of eggs, bacon, mushrooms and toast is hard to beat, since coffee and orange juice are also included in the price.

For a business that prides itself on quality eats, serving a commercially sealed pat of butter alongside the chunky white toast seems a little strange. A mini-pot filled with butter would have been better.

A thick, crispy-brown edge and firm centre gives the plate-sized Salmon omelette (\$7.70) the appearance of a classic Italian frittata. The combination of chunky smoked salmon and tomato doesn't work as well as I had imagined. Classic options like mushroom and



Family affair: Pane e Vino co-owner Gino D'Arienzo and his family serve up classic Italian fare at their City cafe

shallot or ham, cheese and tomato are probably better.

Even though our coffee order is taken along with our original requests, it's sensibly not delivered until after we've eaten.

The cafe takes its coffee seriously and a Segafredo flat white (\$2.75) has a creamy, rich flavour that goes hand in hand with this brand's reputation for quality. Sadly the same can't be said of the Hot chocolate (\$3.20), which tastes too strong and a little oily.

While breakfast isn't Pane e Vino's strongest session, lunch on previous visits has usually been quite good and service is consistently high. Risottos, pastas, antipasto platters, salads, filled panini and foccace make up the lunch and dinner menus.

Sweet-tooths won't be able to go past the sticky desserts or vivid rainbow of gelati, made by Delizia in Fortitude Valley, on show.

The cafe does a roaring trade whenever a concert draws a crowd

to Festival Hall across the road and a full bar indicates this is also a popular place to meet for a drink.

And besides, you can always front up for breakfast the next morning.

THE CHECK

► *Pane e Vino*, corner of Albert and Charlotte St, the City. Phone 3220 0044. Open 7.30am to 10pm Sunday to Thursday, and 7.30am to 11.30pm Friday and Saturday. Licensed.