

IF VARIETY is the spice of life then Peroni restaurant might live for ever. In less than one year, Peroni has become a coveted favorite eating place for dozens of regulars in Melbourne's sprawling Waverley area and owners Stephen and Bernadette Hall believe they know why ...

"It's all about choice," says Bernadette Hall. "We have a policy of regularly perfecting new dishes to offer our customers." The Halls are now into their fourth menu since they opened only 10 months ago.

This variety of menu which meets seasons as well as palates; the quality of the ingredients; the knowhow behind its preparation and the comfortably cosy but not confined atmosphere make Peroni a winner.

Several dishes remain from the original menu including the somewhat exotic warm brain salad and of course what Bernadette describes as the best Caesar salad this side of Ancient Rome.

Basically the four menus have run the theme of Italian/International blend. In fact, the food is nicely described in a line on the \$9.50 special lunch menu which goes: "Could you ever travel to Europe and back in your lunch break for less than \$10?"

Bernadette and Stephen build their menus around main courses, offering each of the major meats. These are served with vegetables (or salads) of course but they come on a separate plate. This is a small point but it is what we might call a Hall mark of service at Peroni.

Speaking of hallmarks ... just wait until you receive your complementary chocolate — designed, devised and hand-made by Stephen.

In a real sense, Stephen has lived for food. His first jobs were as a kitchen hand and a pastry cook. Then came a chef's apprenticeship with the Grand Hyatt Melbourne.

Diverse and

ADVERTISEMENT



delicious dining

This second-to-none training earned him the position as sous chef at Glencoe restaurant, Mont Albert where he met Bernadette.

When they married in 1992 how did they honeymoon? They travelled to Europe where Stephen worked at the five-star Hotel Gellert in Budapest, Hungary. It was give and take during his stay — he devised a menu with a strong Australian flavour but at the same time he absorbed in a short time the equivalent of years of learning about European food and cooking styles.

Since then the Halls have been partners in the fullest sense in several different aspects of the hospitality industry. Stephen worked as executive chef with full control over staff and kitchen at the popular Chateau Wyuna and later as owner, with Bernadette, of a small specialist gourmet catering service.

He had completed his chef's apprentice-

ship at the Grand Hyatt in Melbourne and later became sous chef at Glencoe restaurant in Mont Albert.

At last it was time to apply all the lessons to a place of their own and they chose Peroni, for

merly Emilio's. As Stephen points out, when you own the restaurant you can do as you please so they have extended the dining area but not the seating numbers, thus making dining more private and comfortable.

The Halls also have introduced outdoors dining in the warmer months; an opportunity more and more Melburnians are learning to enjoy. Stephen's own enjoyment is simple enough:

"When we see people leaving with a smile, we're happy."