

Bendigo is best known for its prominent role in Victoria's 19th-century gold rush, but there's plenty more to mine here today than relics of that bygone era.

The city has made a big, bold push to become a foodie destination, with merchants and tourism authorities launching the Food Fossicking campaign. Intrigued, I went to check out just what's going on with Bendigo's food scene

Produce and products Bendigo Wholefoods is the kind of store that wouldn't be out of place in the trendy neighbourhoods of Manhattan but, unfortunately, is still in short supply in Melbourne. It's as much a destination as a grocery; old-fashioned on the outside but inside typifying all that is best about the move towards organics, the slow-food philosophy and multiculturalism in cooking.

The emphasis is firmly on what's local and in season, with about 90 producers stocking the shelves with their goodies (and holding tastings). But that doesn't mean the exotic gets forgotten, with Bendigo Wholefoods claiming they haven't yet seen a recipe they can't supply all the ingredients for. There's also an extensive seed and seedling selection for gardeners

Bendigo also puts on a farmers' market on the second Saturday of each month in Rosalind Park, where many of the same local producers showcase their wares.

Cafes and restaurants One of the great features of the Bendigo cafe and restaurant scene is that many of the places double



You needn't dig deep for fresh, local foodie delights in Bendigo, writes **Chris Vedelago**.

Wine Bank on View (above) and Bendigo Wholefoods (above right). PICTURES: VICTORIAN TOURISM

as shops selling the same, often local, ingredients and products they cook with.

Just the name of the Epicurean Delicatessen sums up what's in store. I'm a sucker for an antipasto platter, and the one on offer here was good enough to see me buy plenty of the bits and pieces from the shop's deli counter to take home.

The Green Olive Cafe & Larder has been a Bendigo institution for nearly three decades and is best-known for its locally roasted house blend coffee. Cup in hand, there are also plenty of fine food products stocked on shelves to peruse.

Another worthwhile stop for caffeine is T'Hooft, a laid-back place that has a

1960s caravan set up inside as the coffee bar.

An option for those looking for a more up-market setting is Wine Bank on View, a former bank-turned-restaurant-and-wine-bar with a selection of local and regional wines that will make you glad you took the train to Bendigo. For drivers, there's always the option of buying some to take home.

Bakeries & sweets Truly good sourdough bread is tough to find, and that's because so few places make it the natural, old-fashioned way. The Good Loaf Sourdough Bakery & Cafe does it right, making the



THE FACTS

- Bendigo Wholefoods 314 Lyttleton Terrace. 54439492
- Bendigo Community Farmers' Market Rosalind Park (9am-1pm, second Saturday of each month)
- The Epicurean Delicatessen 79 Mitchell Street. 5443 2699
- The Green Olive Cafe & Larder 11 Bath Lane. 54422676
- T'Hooft 322 Lyttleton Terrace. 54444448
- Wine Bank on View 45 View Street. 54444655
- The Good Loaf Sourdough Bakery & Cafe 404 Hargreaves Street. 54442171
- Gillies Famous Pies 266 Hargreaves Street. 54434965
- Indulge Fine Belgian Chocolates Shop 26, Fountain Court. 54411770
- More information foodfossickers.com.au, bendigotourism.com

bread without additives and preservatives. The circular building itself is worth a look because it's a rare, heritage-listed example of a 1950s-era tyre service station.

For a traditional Aussie meat pie, or something a little more creative, try Gillies Famous Pies, which has been operating since 1951 — and for good reason.

Although I don't have much of a sweet tooth, I can say there were rave reviews all round from family and friends for the hand-made treats I brought home from Indulge Fine Belgian Chocolates. **M**

DISCLOSURE: Car hire and lunch at Wine Bank on View was provided courtesy of Tourism Victoria.