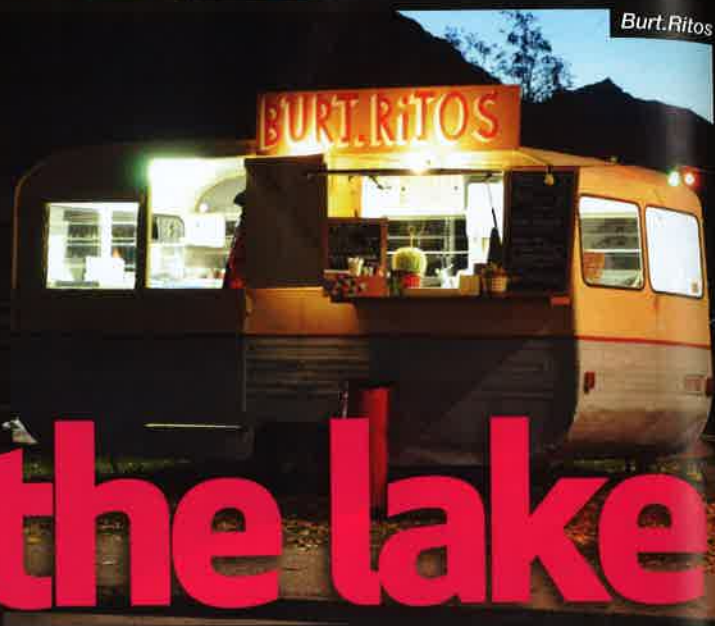


White House



Burt.Ritos



top of the lake

Add excellent cuisine to beautiful nature and exceptional wine as

► **THERE'S THE LAKE**, of course, which stretches off to the mountains in the distance, with Mount Aspiring rising beautifully and symmetrically over the water, snow-covered into spring and summer.

Wanaka also has some fantastic local producers and farmers, not to mention the wine of Central Otago, and these add up to some very good eating in Wanaka – small, casual eateries, a great cafe scene and a handful of food trucks.

There's also Bistro Gentil, one of the finest fine diners in New Zealand. You should go.

BISTRO GENTIL

Chef James Stapley made his name at Canterbury's Pegasus Bay before spending eight years cooking for private guests at Wanaka's Whare Kea Lodge. These days, you'll find him at Bistro Gentil, which is a small, elegant restaurant – custom wooden furniture, good modern art from the owner's collection – on the edge of the Wanaka Golf Course, just out of town.

It's a very fine spot: they do lunch, and soon there will be a cooking school on the grounds. But you really should book in for a seven-course degustation dinner. Stapley changes the menu

each evening depending on what's good in the garden and what he can get from the local area – he uses Cardrona Merino lamb and beef from an organic farm up the road. From this, he makes gastronomic poetry – food that is both challenging and deeply satisfying. We ate a dish of "unsmoked salmon" where the salmon had been cooked *sous-vide* at 60° for 40 minutes, and all the other things on the plate – charred cucumber, smoked horseradish cream and puffed salmon-skin – were lightly smoky. It's clever food, and beautiful – every dish comes layered with delicate greens and edible flowers – but you never feel like he's trying too hard. bistrogentil.co.nz

THE WHITE HOUSE

The White House is a ramshackle white-plaster house behind a huge hedge just on the edge of downtown Wanaka. The dining room is on the ground floor, with a handful of tables, scuffed timber floors and lots of old Persian rugs. It's fantastic: the wine list is brilliant, with plenty of local pinot noir served by the (very generous) glass, and the food is simple – rustic peasant fare with a Middle Eastern flavour and plenty of vegetarian options. I ordered a lamb rump that was rubbed with Moroccan spices and served perfectly medium rare, with puy lentils and a little bit of yoghurt; it was one of the best things I ate last year. 33 Dunmore Street, Wanaka



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