

Baker's vanguard

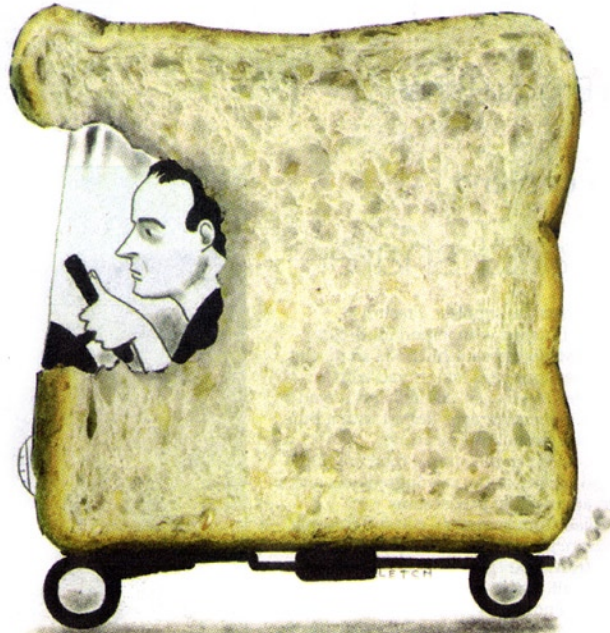
*Head for the port and have a Captain
Cook at the loaves and pastries.*

I was wrong when I wrote that I would never drive to Mascot, or anywhere else in Sydney, for a bread roll (Eat up, November 1). I have since driven to Banksmeadow for exactly that. And to eat breakfast and to avoid writing about yet another café on Kent Street. I'm not a complete weirdo.

It was also for Brasserie Bread's garlic bread. Available only on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, it's studded with caramelized roasted garlic cloves and laced with pepper, balsamic vinegar and sea salt. It's more a loaf than a roll; more of a meal. It's certainly worth the lengthy, tedious and potentially soul-destroying drive along Botany Road to the bakery's spanking new HQ.

If Banksmeadow seems like an unlikely foodie destination that's because it is. Brasserie Bread (comprising retail outlet, café and factory) is situated across the road from Botany Golf Course and within sight of the massive Port Botany gantry cranes. It is a long way from anywhere, but ultimately worth every traffic light and lunatic Sydney motorist you encounter along the way.

The retail outlet is to the left as you enter,



the counter at which orders are placed is to the right. The bakery is behind glass at the back and the windows are placed at just the right height for a small boy to stand on the café's banquette seating beside us and press his nose to the glass.

We begin drooling over the pastries and contemplate a breakfast menu that features a bacon and egg pie, granola with stewed fruit and goat's yoghurt, and baked ricotta with prosciutto or tomatoes. There's also a special of blueberry pancakes (the batter made with sourdough

starter) with honeycomb butter. Elsewhere papers are being read and some of Sydney's best café food is being made, bought or eaten.

Despite the activity there's a sense of calm to the place, even from a young couple and assorted family conducting a taste test of baked goods for what sound like wedding plans.

Coffee and a pasty soon arrive. The young boy at the window understandably grows bored of the sight of men and dough and stainless steel and begins peppering us with bits of pain au chocolat (\$3).

No sooner have I raised a retaliatory fistful of my excellent apple pastry (topped with crème fraiche and pistachios) than his mother distracts him with a handful of raw dough provided by the waiter. Sensing an opportunity, I peg the gooey, sticky, delicious pastry at him as hard as I can. His mother is a real sport about it.

Reality intervenes in the shape of wonderfully sour cherry toast with Bitton Gourmet's orange and honey jelly (\$2.50). A toasted sandwich of tallegio, prosciutto, rocket and red peppers (\$7) and a genuinely fresh squeezed orange juice (\$4.50) round out proceedings.

So good is everything that I contemplate moving to Banksmeadow or applying for a job on the wharves so that I can have this café as my local. Or ordering another pastry at the very least.

John Saxby