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■ Floored

AFTER all the push-me-pull-you of the past few months, it is confirmed that Tony Papas and Robert Smallbone are closing their Bondi venture, **First Floor**. Chef Martin Boetz, who has been there only three months, says he is disappointed and believes that the problem has been opening only three days a week. "Nobody was sure when the place was open and there wasn't the chance to build momentum," he says. But Boetz is hardly on the scrap heap. His previous employers immediately rehired him and he's going back to New York to cook for Mr and Mrs Bockman at their lavish Southampton estate – you can see what that is all about in the December/January issue of *Vogue Entertaining & Travel*, which features Boetz and the Bockmans. Nice work if you can get it, etc.

■ Don't ring us

JUST a thought for all of you who are ringing to ask for recommendations for Christmas restaurants – take advantage of the expert opinions that go to make up the *1999 Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide* (Anne O'Donovan, \$18.95). We have 20 copies to give away – for your chance to win, phone 1900 969 471. Lines close at midnight tonight, after which the winners will



By Maggie Alderson

be drawn. Maximum call cost 50 cents. Mobile and payphones extra.

■ Venetian class

RENATTO PICCOLOTTO, *chef de cuisine* at the glorious Cipriano Hotel in Venice, will be cooking in an altogether less formal venue this month as guest chef at Nielsen Park Kiosk, on Shark Beach in Vaucluse. Piccolotto will prepare three Venetian feasts: a sunset dinner on December 23, lunch on Boxing Day (a great possie from which to watch the Sydney-to-Hobart start) and a gala on New Year's Eve with staff dressed as *gondolieri* (hmmm). Chef will also hold three-hour masterclasses for keen cooks on December 28 and 29. (Perhaps such a distinguished visitor will enable this column to forgive the new owners of NPK for depriving us of one of the best burgers in Sydney since they gentrified the kiosk ...) Call 9337 1574 to book.

■ Prime goods

NOT three wise men nor three French hens, but three ideas for your Christmas table. **Prime Steak Co** (run by the Kingsley's Australian Steakhouse people) is offering prime hams and turkeys delivered direct. The smoked ham on the bone is a lean half leg of pork, weighing 4.5-5kg, for \$59.50. Turkey lurkey weighs about 3.5kg and comes in at \$45.50. Call 1300 783 257 to order. Delicious though they are, there will be several kilos of each left for Boxing Day lunch (there just will, it's a Christmas mystery), and it will be greatly enhanced by a big spoonful of the

Eschallot Wine Relish from **Maggie's Preserves** (which used to be called Maggie Dougan's Fine Foods.) These homemade chutneys are available from **The Cheese Shop**, Mosman, **Edgecliff Fine Foods** and **Goldy's Gourmet Fare** in Lindfield.

■ Gone fishing

YOU'LL have to get up early, but it will be worth it to see behind the scenes at Sydney Fish Market, watching the fish auction in action. Tours will take place until next Wednesday. There is no charge, but all donations will go to the Salvation Army's Christmas Appeal, which is a Very Good Thing. Call the Fish Line on 9552 2180 to book a place and to get info about the special ferry services during the Christmas break. And remember, the market will be open 36 hours non-stop from 5am on December 23.

■ Painted brush

MELBOURNE'S loss will be Sydney's gain. Steve Bennett (the Rod McGeoch of department stores ...) is acting as consultant on the restaurant and retail element down at Woolloomooloo's Finger Wharf. This is great news, but what a shame he wasn't able to advise on the final colour on the refurbished building. Apparently, that bright blue is a Heritage directive. Don't these people know about patina? Do the Italians whitewash the Colosseum?

■ Do drop inn

AFTER major renovations (which have also made it lower case), **paddington inn** has reopened its food service, and it's a funky thing. A lofty



Funky thing The new-look paddington inn.

Photograph by QUENTIN JONES.

space with feature walls of tweed fabric and light fittings that look like suspended glass clouds, there is no dish over \$14.50. And you order at the bar, so it's a great way to have real food without fuss. There are tables, booths, counter seats (perfect for when you want to have *The New Yorker* as your date) and, for after-dinner smooching, you can retreat into one of the quirky little siderooms, which look like they've been decorated by David Lynch. It has all been designed by Jo Laurie, who did Nylon, Oblivion and Barzaar in London. The menu by new chef Marcus Mano is simple (beer batter fish and chips, \$12.50), but not dumb (grilled quail and kipfler potato salad with poached egg, \$12). A really good mix of casual and groovy, with attention to detail where it matters. 338

Oxford Street, 9380 5913. Food served noon-3pm, 6pm-10pm, daily.

■ Beach party

AS of last night **Beach Road** is on summer time, opening for dinner every night and for lunch from Wednesday to Sunday. The deck area has been refurbished and, with a beautiful orange feature wall, it is a gorgeous place to be. 1 Beach Road, Palm Beach. 9974 1159.

■ Oops

THE phone number for **Pastabilities** (and its festive sweet ravioli) was wrong in last week's column. It should have been 9281 0267. Sorry for any inconvenience (blame it on the boogie).