

eat



Pierre at last

A top chef decides to mix it under Canvas, writes **Bob Hart**



▲ **A steal:**
the '05 Scorpio
pinot rose from the
Mornington
Peninsula.

► **Tasty tagine:**
broth laced with
saffron-enhanced
kipfler potatoes,
mussels, prawns
and flathead tails.

► **Dish of the day:**
(main picture)
roasted hapuku
fillet on crushed
potatoes, green
olives and parsley,
flanked by anchovy
fritters.

▼ **Distinguished:**
Pierre Khodja is a
wizard in the
kitchen.

▼ **Welcome:**
inside the sleek and
stylish Canvas.

Pictures:
DEAN CAMBRAY



► **Canvas**
302-320 BURWOOD RD, HAWTHORN
Ph: 9819 2200

Lunch and dinner daily. Licensed.
Expect to pay \$60 a head plus wine for
three courses.

IT IS five years since he arrived in
Victoria, but at last one of our most
gifted international chefs has cho-
sen to move to civilisation.

Since Pierre Khodja migrated from
London, where he was rated by many
alongside a promising newcomer called
Gordon Ramsay, his talents have
blushed almost unseen.

He chose to settle, with his wife and
three daughters, on the Mornington
Peninsula, where he opened a restau-
rant at which his wizardry was seen by
a few but not nearly enough.

So this year he gave up the battle —
just as the creators of a fine, new
Hawthorn establishment, as luck would
have it, were looking for a chef as
distinguished as the gleaming premises
in which they intended to open a sleek
and stylish restaurant called Canvas.

Mercifully, their eyes met. And the
result, as a brilliant lunch demonstrated
this week, is possibly the best food to
have been offered in this gastronomi-
cally deprived sector of Melbourne.

My mate and I inevitably threw
ourselves at the mercy of Khodja — a
Frenchman of Algerian extraction —
which resulted in a meal that was both
extraordinary and excessive. Which is
by no means a complaint.

We began with one of the finest quail
dishes (recipe below) either of us had
eaten — a small bird each, split, partly
boned, seared and gently steamed,



try

Eating well in the inner east was a challenge until Canvas came along
to support the other handful of decent spots, which include:

- **The Undertaker**, 329 Burwood Rd, Hawthorn. Ph: 9818 3944
- **Centonove**, 109 Cotham Rd, Kew. Ph: 9817 6468
- **Estivo**, 330 High St. Kew. Ph: 9853 1727
- **Tea House**, 911-913 Burke Rd, Hawthorn East. Ph: 9882 9088

and the hint of mid-eastern flavours
infused into the dish made it magical.

Next, a conical tagine arrived. Inside
lurked a delicate broth laced with
saffron-enhanced kipfler potatoes,
mussels, prawns and flathead tails.

AND again, things such as chips of
preserved lemon, cinnamon and
other subtly applied exotics
brought the dish together exquisitely.

Meltingly tender and richly flavoured
roasted rump of lamb was presented
with braised fennel and sections of fiery
merguez sausages, all meeting in a
gloriously accented lamby jus.

And just as we were assuming we had
eaten our main courses, another arrived

Was this, in fact, the dish of the day?
Neither of us could quite remember.

Our wine choice had been an inspired
one: the '05 Scorpio pinot rose from the
Mornington Peninsula befriended every
morsel served, and was a steal at \$45.

Chef Khodja, however, had no intention
of quitting when he was this far ahead.

Cheeses arrived — three, all French:
a Pont l'Eveque, a St Andre and a
magnificent Roquefort, all soft, ripe and
remarkable enough, one would hope, to
shame those dim-witted food regula-
tors who rail against real cheeses.

After which, inevitably, came pud-
ding: for me a caramelised pineapple
parfait with a jasmine sorbet and
mango salad; for my mate a plate of