

Italian fare, Yankee flair

■ NEW York expat **ANTHONY DISPENSA** has cooked in some of the world's best Italian restaurants, but strangely hasn't eaten much of the cuisine since moving to Melbourne.

"I haven't really had Italian food since I've been here," Dispensa said.

"People have brought stuff (into the restaurant) they've made at home, like salumi, but I haven't gone out for it."

Dispensa made the move Down Under five months ago after being poached by chef mate **MATTHEW BUTCHER**. He's leading the kitchen at CBD restaurant Ronnie's, and is group chef for Butcher's hospitality business ETO Collective.

The New York-Italian joint opened last year in **GUY GROSSI**'s former Osteria Merchant space, but like many city eateries failed to gain momentum post-Covid.

Dispensa wants to bring something new to Melbourne, gleaned from his time working in some of the world's best kitchens such as London's Dinner by Heston and most recently New York celebrity magnet Carbone.

He's changed 90 per cent of Ronnie's menu, adding more pastas inspired by fond childhood memories, while honouring that traditional New York-Italian restaurant experience.

"When the Italians moved to New York they put together a lot of cool things, but brought their own style of cuisine to Manhattan, and that's what I'm doing here," he said.

RONNIE'S, RIALTO PIAZZA, 525 COLLINS ST, MELBOURNE