

# City foodie brings cuisine honours home

Chantel Dartnall, the youngest so far to clinch the Prudential Eat Out Chef of the Year Award, says the honour came thanks to her 10-year plan to the top.

## Sprinkle of Gauteng spice to awards

**"I** HAD a 10-year plan," says petite Chantel Dartnall, executive chef of Mosaic restaurant at the exquisite Orient situated outside of Pretoria, just off the Atteridgeville/Hartebeespoort Dam road in the Francolin Conservation area, in response to her Prudential Eat Out Chef of the Year Award announced last weekend.

It's a few years ahead of time, this award, and she's one of the youngest in the 10-year existence of the award to have this honour bestowed on her.

"It's great to know that the growth you show from year to year pays off," she says.

Catching her on her way back to Pretoria by Rovos Rail after the Cape Town award ceremony, she is already thinking about her restaurant's future.

Together with her all-girl team consisting of Izaane Mocke and Agnes Molutsi, she has great plans.

"We're only at the start of our experimental journey," says Chantel, who is off on a trip to Cambodia and Burma during their Christmas break. They're closed between December 28 and January 20.

What she is hoping to focus on is botanical cuisine. Long known for her use of especially flowers in her food, she says this is a burgeoning cuisine genre globally.

"It makes sense because of our setting and our gardens," she says.

But with Thai food one of her personal favourites and her visit in a month's time, she knows that her restaurant and menus are in for an adventurous ride.

"I've always been inspired by nature."



Chantel Dartnall has every reason to beam after being adjudged the Prudential Eat Out Chef of the Year in Cape Town last weekend.

PRETORIA'S Chantel Dartnall, who has been crowned Chef of the Year with the launch of the latest annual issue of Eat Out has brought some Gauteng flavour to the Cape-dominated awards.

The 2009 Prudential Eat Out Restaurant Awards have brought a new menu of South Africa's top restaurants and chefs into the spotlight with the 10th anniversary of the awards.

La Colombe was renamed Eat Out Restaurant of the Year in 2009. It is led by chef Luke Dale-Roberts, who captivated the judges for the second consecutive year. He went beyond the seasonal menu by raising the bar even higher with his conceptual Elements menu.

The menu draws on inspiration from La Colombe's breathtaking surroundings like the Tokai forest.

Not only was Chantel honoured as best chef, her restaurant Mosaic, came second in the Top 10 list.

"This year had the most gruelling judging process by far – it was very difficult for the judges to reach a consensus, and there was fierce competition for each position in the list of top 10. It was definitely the newcomers to the industry who have set the pace for an exciting gastronomic year ahead."

Together with Mosaic, who last year made the Top Ten, Roots at Forum Homini in the Cradle of Humankind region was the other Gauteng contender.

As a contributor to Eat Out magazine,



The 2010 edition of Eat Out features 1 001 of the best restaurants in the country – from fabulously fancy to cool and casual. The issue boasts the chefs and restaurants that take their patrons on culinary journeys. Visit [www.eatout.co.za](http://www.eatout.co.za) for more on all the winning chefs and restaurants.

I firmly believe we have at least a handful of contenders from Pretoria alone.

We're proud of these two excellent restaurants who have established a national identity with this recognition.

The full list:

1. La Colombe, Cape Town
2. Mosaic Restaurant, Pretoria
3. Rust en Vrede Restaurant, Stellenbosch
4. Terroir, Stellenbosch
5. The Roundhouse Restaurant, Cape Town (new)
6. The Restaurant at Grande Provence, Franschhoek (new)
7. The Greenhouse at the Cellars-Hohenort, Cape Town (new)
8. Roots, Johannesburg
9. 9th Avenue Bistro, Durban
10. Overture, Stellenbosch and The Tasting Room at Le Quartier Français, Franschhoek

The coveted Service Award went to Rust en Vrede Restaurant.

The restaurant's service is about caring and hospitality, and it's obvious that training of the highest calibre is of absolute importance.

For the first time, Eat Out editor Abigail Donnelly has awarded two Editor's Choice Awards. These awards honour different, accessible dining experiences.

Best Bistro went to Bizerca Bistro, where chef and owner Laurent Deslandes showcases classic and seasonal dishes with bold, but never overcomplicated flavours.

Best Country Kitchen was awarded to Marina's Home Deli & Bistro. She is known for her nostalgia-invoking dishes that are made with care and generosity in her own corner of country heaven.

# Editor's pick of best 5 eateries in town

EAT OUT editor Abigail Donnelly's favourite restaurants in Pretoria as they appear in their latest issue:

**Geet Indian Restaurant**, 541 Fehrsen Street, Brooklyn

012 460 3199

From starters to mains, the cuisine is constantly being reinvented, while staying true to the traditional Indian flavours of the whole subcontinent.

Geet's garden vegetables are splendid. Or opt for the more extravagant prawns in cumin and onion gravy.

**Mosaic Restaurant**, The Orient Boutique Hotel, Francolin Conservation Area, Elandsfontein, Crocodile River Valley

012 371 2902/3/4

Over the past three years this team of young female food enthusiasts, headed by Chantel Dartnall – who was named 2009 Prudential Eat Out Chef of the Year – has come into its own. From carefully selected produce to wonderful flavour combinations, the food is sheer brilliance.

Experience cauliflower panna cotta with champagne jelly, topped with a perfectly poached quail egg. Delight in oxtail tortellini in a velvety oxtail jus, but save yourself for the best-ever quail pithivier.

Cheese plates and desserts are just another avenue for these chefs to express the fun they are having in the kitchen.

**La Madeleine**, 122 Priory Road, Lyn-



A delicate Chantell Dartnall dish with her penchant for anything floral.

PICTURE: BOOK FOR WOOLWORTHS TASTE ISSUE 31

nwood Ridge

012 361 3667

Lamb kidneys with mustard have long been a signature dish, but these days the

father-daughter team of Daniel and Ann Leusch is also devising somewhat more contemporary items. The prawn cocktail has a singular La Madeleine charm without veering towards tongue-in-cheek retro.

If pork cheeks are on the specials menu, don't hesitate! And leave space for some of the most exciting yet comforting desserts in Gauteng – think classic Grand Marnier soufflé or warm chocolate fondant.

**La Pentola**, Riviera Gallery, 5 Well Street, Riviera

012 329 4028, 012 329 9123

Shane Sauvage is La Pentola. The cuisine is always evolving and it's an epicurean adventure, from the magnificent crayfish carpaccio in a dreamy curry sauce to the delicate apple cider soup with Granny Smith fritters for dessert.

**Ritrovo Ristorante**, Waterkloof Heights Shopping Centre, 102 Club Avenue, Waterkloof Heights

012 460 4367/5173

Ritrovo offers a veritable food and wine experience, as one would expect from a passionate sommelier and award-winning chefs Giovanni and Fortunato Mazzone.

A starter could be perfectly cooked scallops with apricot and saffron sauce. For mains you can't go wrong with the signature duck confit – cooked to a crisp, golden perfection.

Don't forget the heavenly ice cream.