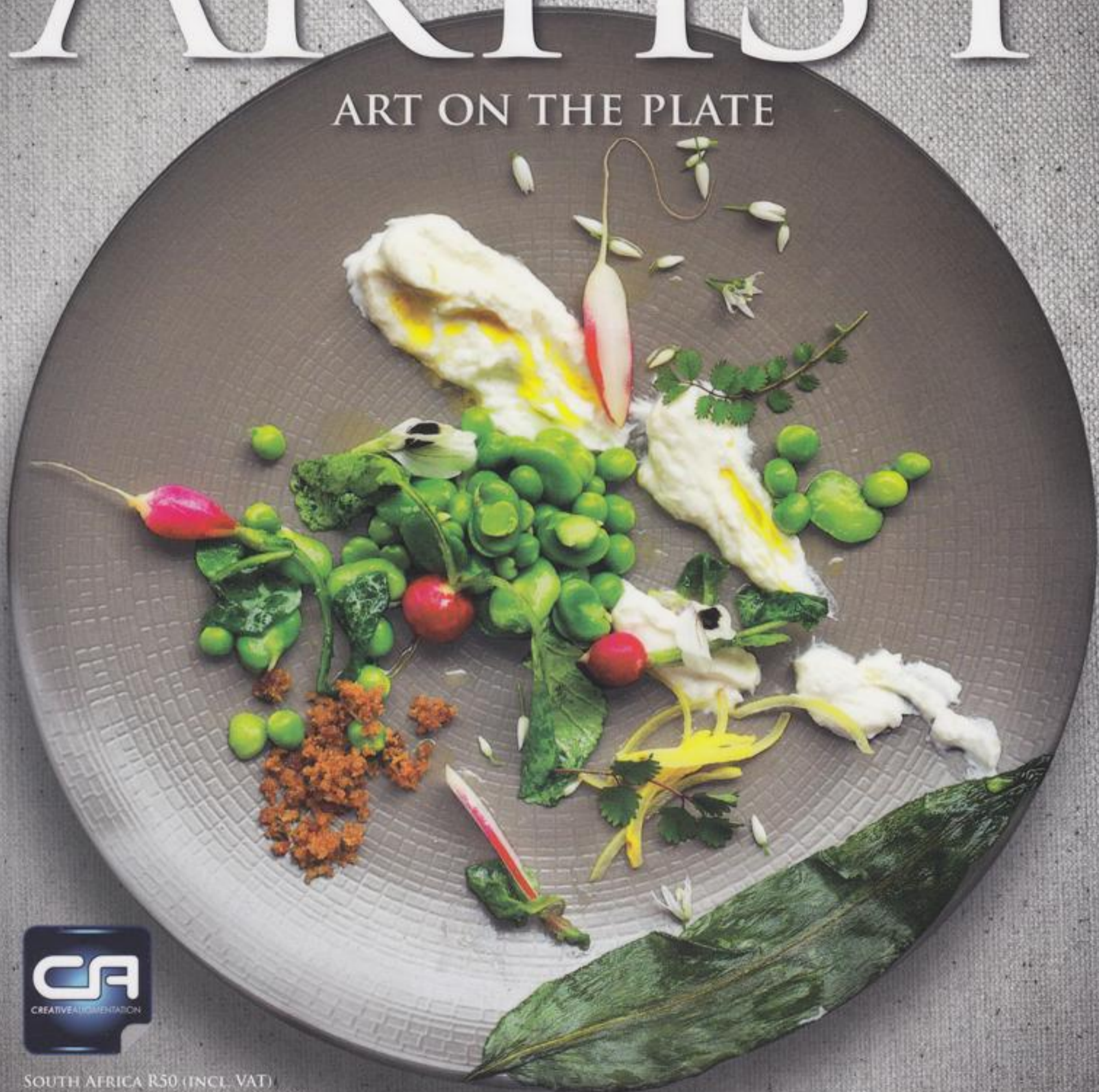


THE CULINARY

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THERE'S MORE TO SCOTLAND THAN WHISKY AND BAGPIPES

Chef Chantel Dartnall made a food pilgrimage to the land of haggis, whisky and oatmeal porridge and soon fell under its magical, gastronomic spell thanks to award-winning Scottish culinary giants such as Andrew Fairlie and Brian Maule.

Written by Chantel Dartnall

Andrew Fairlie is the only chef in Scotland to hold two Michelin stars and *Harden's* food guide has named his establishment, the renowned restaurant, Andrew Fairlie at Gleneagles, Britain's best restaurant.

However, today he is challenged in the culinary stakes by Brian Maule at Chardon d'Or. The first restaurant in Glasgow to hold a Michelin star since Gordon Ramsay's Amaryllis closed in 2004.

Both received their first culinary breaks thanks to the famous Roux family whose members include Michel Roux Jr, a familiar face to many South Africans thanks to his appearance on TV's *MasterChef: The Professionals*.

After completing his apprenticeship, Fairlie won The Roux Scholarship, regarded as the premier competition for chefs in the UK. "The win meant that I had the choice of working in any three star restaurant in France for three months.

I went to Michel Guérard and ended up spending a year there. Technically, I was a good chef when I arrived, but living in France really ignited my passion for food. To this day it was the pivotal point in my culinary career." He worked in a number of top French kitchens before returning to Scotland to work at Glasgow's One Devonshire Gardens before setting up shop at Gleneagles in 2001.

In January 2006 Restaurant Andrew Fairlie became one of 11 selected restaurants in the UK to be awarded two Michelin stars and was voted one of the world's top 10 Greatest Hotel Restaurants by *America's Hotel* magazine. In the same year, Andrew was voted AA Chef's Chef of the Year. Restaurant Andrew Fairlie is also Scotland's first and only Grands Chefs Relais & Chateaux.

Fairlie oversees a menu that blends the best in French and Scottish cooking with an emphasis on outstanding ingredients

from the Parisian markets and fine suppliers closer to home. Fairlie says the restaurant reaps the rewards of a location rich in natural resources and produce: "Where we are based in Perthshire, we're very lucky in terms of the produce we have on our doorstep. Our beef is all local, the game is from the estate, and the lamb comes from my brother Jim who is a farmer."

Depending on what produce is available, the restaurant has three different menus each offering something different to the diner. Of these 3 menus, the Du Marché menu often features the more creative offering at the restaurant.

Says Fairlie: We often use cuts of meat and lesser-known fish to give people something a little more adventurous to try."

A signature dish at Restaurant Andrew Fairlie offers hand-dived scallops which

are caught by Guy Grieve off the Isle of Mull. Another uses smoked lobster, its intense smokiness coming from a 12 hour infusion over whisky barrels.

Another stand-out dish is the foie gras "courgette" with a liquid foie gras centre.

It's no wonder that Restaurant Andrew Fairlie is regarded as gourmet's Scottish Holy Grail.

This being said, a dark horse worth visiting is Le Chardon d'Or, Brian Maule's Glasgow establishment.

Maule was appointed head chef of the Roux family's Michelin star restaurant Le Gavroche in London. At the tender age of 24 he found himself in charge of a select brigade of 18 chefs.

Achieving a lifelong dream, Maule opened the doors of Le Chardon d'Or in 2001, bringing with him his international reputation for preparing some of Europe's best cuisine as well as an incredible attention to detail.

Food is prepared with the finest Scottish produce using traditional French techniques. His menus sound deceptively simple, but his skill lies in his clever flavour combinations.

Maule doesn't have the privilege to forage for his ingredients as he is in the centre of Glasgow so his produce is sourced from a few local suppliers including a local slaughterhouse as well as further afield in Europe. Quality is key and the resulting dishes are honest and prepared with finesse and flair.

Liberal portions in fine dining restaurants are as rare as unoccupied tables at The Ritz for high tea in

London, but at Chardon d'Or you will find hearty portions elegantly presented. And for a fine dining establishment, dishes are also reasonably priced when compared to many of his far more pricy competitors.

You can taste Maule's energy and passion in every perfectly created dish that is placed in front of you. He's a chef in touch with his ingredients – there are no smoke and mirrors, no molecular foolery, but an authentic return to pure taste, executed to perfection. Pan fried scallops with a raisin and walnut dressing are balanced by the velvety tones of an accompanying cauliflower purée.

A refreshing ceviche of prawns, tuna and scallops comes with a wild rocket salad. A starter of asparagus and goats cheese in panko crumbs with white truffle dressing provides almost otherworldly tastes.

He uses five cuts of pork to create a mini degustation of pork on one dish. Cheeks, belly and crackling.

Says the soft-spoken Maule about his menu: "Trends come and go. A decade ago people did not always understand what they were eating. Now it's different.



Chantel Dartnall has become renowned, not only in South Africa, but in culinary circles around the world, for her innovative and meticulous approach to modern fine dining. She is the Chef at Restaurant Mosaic, located in The Orient Private Hotel in the Francolin Conservation Area, Elandsfontein, Crocodile River Valley, Pretoria, Gauteng.

If you eat duck, you expect to taste the duck! People are looking for flavour and for fresh and seasonal food, but in the present economic climate they also want value for money."

