

A R1,600 meal prepared by South Africa's best chef

By Quinton Bronkhorst April 21, 2015 32 Comments

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For R1,610 per person you can enjoy a seven course meal, paired with top SA and international wines, prepared by the number one chef in South Africa.

The chef is S.Pellegrino South African Chef of the Year Chantel Darntall, and her base of operations is [Restaurant Mosaic at The Orient](#) – easily South Africa's top restaurant by mere fact of having her menu grace its tables.

Chef Darntall trained at the Prue Leith Culinary Academy in South Africa, and extended her training in Michelin three-star restaurants under top chefs such as Nico Ladenis of Chez Nico at 90 Park Lane in London, and Michael Caines of Gidleigh Park in Devon.

She's meticulous and precise in her presentation, renowned locally and abroad for her modern take on fine dining, and is never absent. If she's not in her kitchen, the restaurant isn't open.

She presents her menu in person, checks in when there's a break in service, and warmly greets you on your way out.

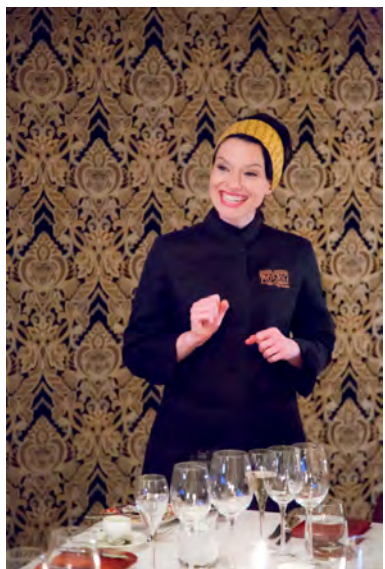
Mosaic features a three-tiered menu that packs a wallop – in flavour, presentation, and price.

For those keen on a lighter culinary experience, there's the petite degustation, which offers four courses for **R625**, with an optional wine pairing for R225-R325.

The next level of gastronomic delight is the discover degustation, which offers five courses for **R735**, with an optional wine pairing for R275-R375.

Or for the most adventurous there's the real deal – the grande degustation, which presents seven courses and a cheese platter for **R1,185**, and optional wine pairing for R325-R425.

So, what do you get for the asking price?



SA Chef of the Year Chantel Darntall presenting her menu

The short answer is an unforgettable culinary experience. The long answer is detailed below – with pictures.

Amuse Bouché (complimentary appetiser)



Parmesan Soup

We were presented with a selection of freshly baked breads: yoghurt and muesli bread, basil rolls, and sweet tomato ciabatta.

Accompanying such an act were some of the most unique butters: saffron infused; French salted; and vanilla – a smorgasbord of flavours that you wouldn't expect in something as simple as a pre-dinner roll.



Infused Butters

The breads were followed up with a small, but immensely flavourful Parmesan soup and a crouton.



Parmesan Soup

Jewels of the Sea



Jewels of the Sea

The first 'real' course was an oyster. But nothing is ever quite that simple here. The oyster was topped with a champagne foam, along with a light apple jelly and some salty caviar to give that slight edge.

It almost seemed a waste to take the traditional oyster-eating action to the dish. The fresh blast of ocean is cut through by a subtle sweet and salty mix as the flavours blow up in your mouth.



Jewels of the Sea

Sunflower Spring



Sunflower Spring

What can only be described as “almost too pretty to eat”, the Sunflower Spring is all about the carrot.

A soft carrot puree is surrounded by an orange blossom yoghurt cream and topped with delicately presented carrot shavings, with jelly adding some sharp sweetness to the mix.



Sunflower Spring

Yellowfin Tuna



Yellowfin tuna

Featuring the tiniest meringues and a wasabi marshmallow, the yellow-fin tuna course presented the thinly-sliced fish in two shades: *au naturale*, enjoyed with a light vinaigrette, and another soaked in beetroot, giving it a striking colour and even more striking taste.



Yellowfin tuna

Millionaire's Nest Egg



Millionaire's Nest Egg

By far the most intricate and flavourful course on the menu, the Millionaire's Nest Egg presented a couple of dainty quail eggs, nestled in a courgette bowl.

The quail eggs are infused – one with truffles and the other with courgette puree – giving an added twist to its seeming simplicity.

What makes the nest and egg worthy of millionaire status, however, is the generous helping of truffle sauce, topped with grated black truffle for an added sensation.



Millionaire's Nest Egg

Alchemist's Infusion



Alchemist's Infusion

What is a meal without a bit of showmanship? The Alchemist's Infusion presents a trio of lobster tail pieces sitting among a fresh vegetable selection.

The twist comes in with the hibiscus consomme (a richly-flavoured soup), which is infused with the floral flavours of the hibiscus plant right in front of you.

The consomme is then poured into the bowl, letting the rock lobster and vegetables soak up the aromatic flavours.



Alchemist's Infusion

Free Range Duck



Free Range Duck

The duck course was by far the heaviest meal: with a duck breast square teaming up with a duck leg confit. The dish is served with poached pears, parsnip puree, and a *foie gras* foam.



Free Range Duck



Free Range Duck

Garden of Eden



Garden of Eden

As a pescetarian option, the Garden of Eden combines Mauritian seabass with a tomato confit and lemongrass.

The meal is arranged in a deconstructed manner, and was designed to be part of the “perfect pairing” – working hand in hand with an Elgin white blend wine.



Garden of Eden

Selection of Cheeses



Cheese Platter

The cheese platter was simple, but then you only really need the cheeses to speak for themselves. The cheeses offered are Manchego, Comte, De Pekelaar, Phantom Forest, Old Amsterdam, and several others.



Cheese Platter

Lemon Verbena



Lemon Verbena

While the sheer amount of lemon on display with this dessert may seem overpowering, it's actually perfectly balanced and refreshing.

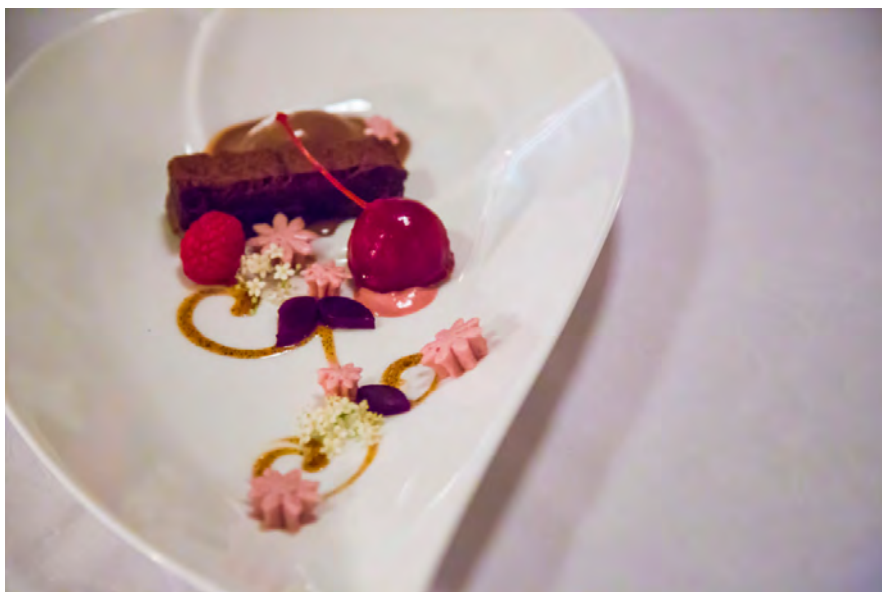
You're presented with a Victorian sponge cake, surrounded by a light jelly with dollops of lime and lemon curd.

It's also served with a lemon sorbet, which is rather cleansing at the end of the culinary journey, as well as a lemon verbena tea, which provides contrasting warmth.



Lemon Verbena

Chocolate Cherry



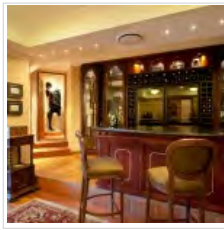
Chocolate Cherry

I don't think it would be a complete menu without the option of chocolate. The chocolate cherry combines bitter dark chocolate bites with a sweet home-made cherry, and cherry marshmallows.

Oh, and there's a deep, rich chocolate ice cream which just rounds off the course, bringing your culinary adventure to a perfect conclusion.



Champagne tasting in the wine cellar



Mosaic champagne bar



Mosaic dining room



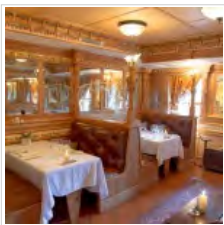
Mosaic sommelier Germain Lehodey



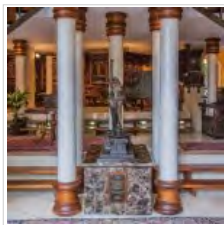
One of Mosaic's wine tomes



The Mosaic Restaurant interior



The Mosaic Restaurant interior



The Orient Hotel entrance hall



Wine glasses on the table