

Mosaic food taste trumps everything



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

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IT'S ALWAYS an exciting prospect when you're invited to one of the best restaurants in the country, one of your all-time favourites and one in your neighbourhood like Mosaic.

It really doesn't matter when you hit Chantel Dartnall's Mosaic. If you go there periodically, it's fascinating to see the development and trajectory from where she first started. It's in the detail, it's in the taste and it remains one of the best food experiences around.

This time the winelands, and more specifically La Motte, was presenting its latest to the Gauteng media but focus was on food as much as on the wine.

It makes sense then to opt for Mosaic while bringing your own chef, Michelle Theron, from Restaurant Pierneef a la Motte to add her own spin to the meal.

The menu alone was quite extraordinary, put together almost like a kind of press release, presenting all the answers one could possibly want following an intricate meal of this kind. The inspiration, ingredients, crockery, always a Mosaic marvel, the fact that you have three happies at the table before you get to the main menu – vegetable macaroons

A washing line of vegetable crisps



Simply shoots.

and herb madeleines, vegetable crisps exquisitely presented, and a mealie melt-in-the mouth puffball – which introduces the more serious menu with a typical Chantel flourish called simply shoots.

She wanted the dish to be an interpretation of the colour green, the taste, scents and visual impression all reminiscent of the first vibrant and lush shoots as they emerge from a herb garden. The ingredients were organically grown, close by, resulting in trademark Chantel – as pretty as it is tasty.

The follow-up mousse de mer Chantel describes as a signature dish. It reminds one of a children's book illustration with the three



Little Black Number.



Vegetable macaroons and savoury Madeleines.

main elements the lemongrass, the langoustine and the risotto.

Could one have a more delicious combination?

She tapped into a walk on the beach when creating this one, watching waves create foam, something most of us have witnessed, and she wanted to recreate it, she says. She's that kind of gal and the flavours and comfort factor in something so modern and quirky is quite spectacular.

Then it was the turn of the Franschhoek chef whose dish titled smoked sweet potato kluitjies, reflected everything their farm restaurant espouses. It's a platter that showcases all the smoking and cur-

ing of meat during hunting trips and also an interpretation of the kind of cooking and preserving as it was done in the old Cape with mosbolletjies and kluitjies both part of that tradition.

With this brioche type bread, grape must is used as a raising agent and the kluitjie is also contemporised magnificently with cooking methods. "It's about making memories with nostalgia coming through on the back of childhood smells," says Michelle.

Instructions were also given to diners on how best to proceed with this plate of food for the best results, how to eat what when...

It was grand fun but I suspect,



Cheese Course

this is one time the meat will be completely overwhelmed by the mosbolletjies and kluitjies which are so spectacular and hard to resist.

For some extra meaty punch, Chantel's Birds of a feather is a deconstruction of the classic coq au vin but using the more delicate quail as well as goose specifically for the amalgamation of birds.

Elements include the honey and aged balsamic glazed quails, saffron scented pasta filled with slow-braised goose and capon and finished with sweet onions and red



Smoked sweet potato kluitjies.

moving slightly closer to the dessert with a sweet and savoury dance that's quite delicate. This course was Chantel's ode to cheese with a composition of matured 36-month French comte combined with an array of condiments and freshly baked breads including cranberry and pear, or if you wished, sour cherry and walnut. All of this was presented on my favourite plate of the afternoon, a Chagal-inspired design.

This is followed by a sugar rush with Chantel in top form and calling this one little black number as a nod to Aubrey Hepburn showcasing the most enchanting embellishment. The real thing consisted of a sinful layered Callebaut couverture chocolate mousse, ganache, salted caramel and Italian gelato.

Available at Mosaic is their autumn Market Menu R700 per person excluding wines; South African wine pairing R350 or international wine pairing R400 per person.

Grandé Degustation Menu R1100 per person with local wine pairing R450 and international R550 per person. Non alcoholic pairings available at R125 for cheaper menu and R225 for the other.