

# Culinary Heaven at Restaurant Mosaic



Restaurant Mosaic at the Orient hotel, located near Pretoria in South Africa, is anything but ordinary. From the moment you arrive on their premises you are transported to a place where it feels like, fairy tales come alive. In the architecture of the hotel there is a clear combination of Oriental, Middle Eastern and Art Nouveau influences visible throughout the design.



We were greeted by the restaurant's sommelier that took us through their welcome drinks list and escorted us to the champagne lounge where we enjoyed a beautiful "Chateau Brown Blanc". The ambience of the room was very oriental with its Persian carpets, Middle Eastern inspired art and detailed wood panelling. It created the perfect setting of what was going to be a wonderful evening.



While enjoying our wine, one of the waiters brought our first amuse bouche a rice paper Chinese roll with different vegetables, nuts and a truffle mousse. These little rolls were just mouth-watering, with just the right amount of truffle combined with the texture from the nuts to balance the dish and tie it all together.

After the first taste of what was yet to come, we were escorted to our table, which turned out to be their “Salon Delacroix” room. The room was set out perfectly, with every single detail well thought out, to take you on a journey back to the 19th century. The ambiance of the room was majestic, with French music playing in the background, mesmerizing while looking at the artwork from the famous French artist, Eugene Delacroix. This made me think that I was in a châteaux somewhere in France and that Napoleon wearing his bicorne would walk in at any moment.



We were served a second amuse bouche, an avocado and cheese mousse. This was just delicious with the silky smoothness of the mousse and perfect balance of the dish.



The sommelier brought us the wine list, however this was not your average wine list. As my husband opened the book it completely looked like he was going to read us a fairy tale. As the wine list was not so much a list but rather a 100 page wine book. This was really impressive and to think this was only their South African wine list, they still

had an international wine list as well. Guess having more than 75,000 bottles of wine from 5780 different labels in their cellar makes for one interesting list. The sommelier, really knew his wines and recommended a beautiful Pinot Noir from Botanica. It was our first time to try wine from this specific vineyard but I have to say, it will surely not be the last time.



The freshly baked bread selection was wheeled into the room. The selection of bread included: Aggie's seed loaf, green olive rye, basil pesto and sun-dried tomato rolls, crusty polenta and



calendula rolls as well as a cranberry and pear cheese bread. It was definitely not an easy task to select one, as they all looked delicious and smelled even better, baked fresh daily off course. After the bread was selected there was an entire range of butters to try. The selection included: Mooirivier salted farm butter, honey and cinnamon, anchovy and caper or lavender and lemongrass. My favourite was the honey and cinnamon, it was smooth and sweet and I could have easily eaten the entire bowl by myself.

Our waiter brought our third amuse bouche, titled "Frogs on the pond" The tempura frog legs were really soft and melted in your mouth along with the wild mushroom and nettle jelly. The presentation of the dish, with the glass bowl added that extra touch of "je ne s e qua" that gave the illusion of the water in the pond.



Our menus arrived, along with Chef Chantel Dartnall (South Africa's top rated female chef), who explained each dish in detail. We as a group selected the Market Dégustation Celebration menu, that consisted of a five course meal, with a choice of a main and a dessert from the menu. Just listening to Chef

Chantel explaining every dish with such passion and pride celebration menu we were about to explore.

After we selected our mains and desserts the food started to arrive, we were in for a treat.

Amuse Bouche – Small Prelude to our menu.



The plate had a variety of different items ranging from macarons, madeleines, to cheese. It was somewhat of a teaser of what was waiting for us further down the menu. The plating was done beautifully with each element placed with precision. If I have a choice, I prefer dessert before the mains as, for me, this is usually the best part of the

meal. Also by the time you get to dessert you are typically full and can't enjoy the dessert to its fullest. Kudos to Chef Chantel for having some dessert before the main, the macarons were to die for.

First Course – "Celebration of Spring"

This dish is Chantel's ode to the French Chef, Michel Bras, where she captures the reflection of spring on a plate. The plate with its floral pattern complements the dish with its elements that added fragrance, flavour and vibrant colour to the dish. The smoky carrot mousse ball was my favourite element on the dish. It was complex and well assembled and this perfect sphere was jam packed with flavour. The crunchiness of the asparagus and

sweet peas added to the freshness of the dish, to create something that replicates the perfect spring. The dish felt like it should be found on the menu of a Michelin Star restaurant.



### The second course – “Genesis”

Chef Chantel received her inspiration for this dish from the origin of life, from “Genesis”. The dish was a sphere of rainbow trout, surrounded by a burst of pomelo with a lemongrass Japanese miso. The lemongrass flavour was very subtle with sudden citrusy bitterness as you bite through the pomelo pieces. An element of surprise that ties the dish together nicely. The colours of the trout, pomelo and edible flowers stood out beautifully in contrast with the black plate.



### The Third Course – Mouse de Mer

Chef Chantel found her inspiration for this dish during a walk on the beach, while watching the foam of the ocean waves as it rolls in leaving behind small shells, seaweed and bits of bark on the sand. The dish was exquisitely plated an almost

perfect representation of the beach. Tomato powder represented the sand with smaller elements representing the items left behind with the foam. Hidden under the langoustine and foam was a rooibos infused risotto that added to the complexity of this dish. While at first struggling to eat this beautiful dish, I soon found it was hard to stop, as each element was pure perfection.

## Remise en Bouch – The Garden Pea

This sweet pea and lime sorbet was the perfect pallet cleanser. The flavour combinations were refreshing. The perfect sphere sorbet looked like a giant pea on the plate. That, with the combination of the fresh pea's, pod and the leaves made for one refreshing summer taste and a true celebration of garden peas.



It was time for the main courses. There were three different options on the menu to select from: “Bouillabaisse” (Seasonal vegetables saffron, cod ), “Prints in the Paddock” (36 days matured Angus beef, sumac, red ivory fruit preserve) or “Queen Quail” (Acacia honey, lavender, spinach veloute). On our table we ordered the “Prints in the Paddock” and “Queen Quail”.

### The forth course – Main Course – “Prints in the Paddock”



The dish was inspired by chef Chantel's South African roots and the use of some rather unusual ingredients like red ivory fruit preserve and sumac. The sumac powder was used to represent the shape of the paddocks where the cattle graze. This tangy lemon flavoured spice balanced the dish, not over powering at all. The beef was cooked to a perfect medium

rare (Chef's Choice) and rested well to allow for great presentation. The elements placed around the beef added crunch as well as colour.

### The forth course – Main Course – “Queen Quail” (Chef's personal favourite on this menu, as the dish is really fresh and colourful)

This dish was inspired by the fragrant Lavender field of Provence, in South East France. The quail legs were confit ed and lightly brushed with lavender



balsamic. The remaining pieces of the quail were deboned and filled with wild mushroom and lightly brushed with akasia honey and lavender flowers. The balsamic created a beautiful balance between the sweetness and the acidity of the dish. The quail was served with an extremely light and smooth spinach velouté that complements the dish well.

It was time for the final course. There were two different options on the menu to select from: “Cheese Selection” (Old Amsterdam, Belnori Kilimajaro and many more cheeses) or “Stardust” (White Peach, Passion Fruit, Vanilla Meringue )

The fifth course – Final Flavours – “Cheese Selection”



The cheeses were brought in on a cheese trolley filled with the most gorgeous blocks of cheeses that include the “Epoisses de Bourgogne,” (Napoleon’s favorite cheese, very suited for our room), “Belnori Phantom Forest” and “Dolcelatte Gorgonzola”. The “Belnori Phantom“ was my favorite, this three week aged goats milk cheese from Benoni

just melts in your mouth. Along with the cheese they served either a cherry and walnut or cranberry and pear roll, both complemented the cheeses very well.

The fifth course – Final Flavours – “Starburst”

The inspiration for this dish comes from the Milky Way and the space between the galaxies. Chef Chantel wanted to create a dish that dissolves in your mouth, the moment you taste it. The passion fruit ice cream was to die for, the amount of flavour



in that one scoop was just mind blowing. The vanilla meringue added that extra crunch that just pops in your mouth. Once you start digging into the meringue you discover the jasmine mouse with poached white peaches. The plate is finished off with colourful sugar dust that adds to the inspiration. Every element on this dish brought a surprise to the plate. Some are just so unique, and the methods of taking the ingredients to that next level makes this dish shoot for the stars.



## “Coffee and Petit Fours”

When the Petit fours arrived, I felt like a child again. The presentation was beautiful and there were flower shaped lolly pops that looked like they were in a vase. On a mini washing line hung nougat, Turkish delight and fudge that melts away in your mouth. The dessert plate had

macarons, Valrhona dark chocolate and lemon curd bonbons with dried forget-me-not rose petals as well as cherry and rose Turkish delight. We were already so full, but decided to stretch our foodie experience just a little bit more. Our waiter brought a small box for the remaining petit fours. What an amazing finale to this culinary experience.

Throughout every single dish, it was clear that Chef Chantel spent hours dreaming up these dishes, every single dish had its own story to tell. She takes so much care with the plating, that every dish leaving her kitchen looks like a work of art.

It is no wonder that this award winning restaurant is among South Africa’s top 5, this along with Chef Chantel being voted as South Africa’s chef of the year (2014). I would highly recommend the restaurant to anyone any day. Chef Chantel you get the DBM splash of approval, no doubt about it.



Photo Credit

<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/572027590143593644/>

<https://www.facebook.com/twotastytummies/>