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MENU

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Chantel takes us on holiday with her

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Restaurant Mosaic at the Orient is a bucket list restaurant where once is never enough. Chef Chantel Dartnall takes inspiration from art and the everyday things she sees and experiences, at home and on her extensive travels to gather new and exciting ideas. Each seasonal menu is themed with an artwork as inspiration.

Her new autumn menu is named “Tabula Rasa”, referencing new beginnings and visions following a period of rest and introspection. The menu came into effect in the week of the autumn equinox, the third week of March. The artwork on the menu is called “Pavlovsk” by Alexander Golovin, a Russian impressionist who specialised in scenography.

Top chefs know that reinventing yourself and your cuisine, especially when you're at the top of your game as Chantel has been for some time, is vital. Rather than choosing the slightly easier path of continuing to do what she already does very well, Chantel chose to clear her mind and begin from a clean slate. Her flavour combinations, botanical ingredient experimentation and culinary genius remain at the core of her new offering.

Each dish on the new menu tells a story, as Chantel's dishes always do. While away on holiday she allowed her mind to drift and took delight in the minutiae of the everyday and ordinary. This has been translated into the truly extraordinary on the plate and palate, a "fantasy world" as she calls it. As she presents each dish and what inspired it – she is always present in the kitchen and restaurant during service – the diner begins a culinary journey.

The grande degustation menu includes a total of ten courses from start to finish and costs R1250 per person, and an additional R585 per person for the sommelier's wine pairing or R250 for the non-alcoholic drinks pairing (full range of specially paired, unique beverages to accompany each dish).

The meal begins with the bread and butter selection, with a range of gourmet bread such as yoghurt and seed loaf, green olive rye bread, sourdough, saffron and calendula rolls, and seaweed rolls (plus a selection of wheat-, gluten- and lactose-free bread and butters suitable for vegans), paired with flavoured butters. And there is wafer-thin crispbread on the table for nibbles as you sit down.

Amuse bouche: Chef's choice prelude to the meal.

First courses:

- **Tidal pool:** Salmon cerviche with verbena aspic, vanilla and seaweed salad. Reminiscent of the tidal pools along the coast filled with a miniature world.
- **Sea mist:** East Coast lobster with saffron and coral. A gentle mist rises up from the plate as the cloche is lifted, and you literally hold your breath as the dish reveals itself.
- **Soupe du jour:** Creamy cauliflower soup with Brussels sprouts filled with foie gras mousse and black Perigord truffle. What started as an amuse bouche seven years ago has defended its position on the main menu given the diner fan base it has amassed.
- **Le lapin:** Braised rabbit with morels and prunes. Sophisticated use of simple flavours.



Remise en bouche:

– **Indian summer:** Palate cleanser of clemengold and nasturtium in a cocoa butter and yuzu

gel sphere.

Main courses:

– **African aromas:** Venison (red hartebeest) and soetdoring smoke with madumbi roots and baby turnips. The dish speaks of campfires, wildlife and South Africa's very own exotic tastes and aromas.

or

– **Le canard:** Free-range duck from De Vlucht, confit with plum and suurvygies, served with a glossy, luscious jus. Chantel recalls Bokbaai vygies from her childhood and her granny making preserves from the sour-tasting flowers and kougoed snacks from the dried flowers.

or

– **Where the river meets the sea:** Halibut and tilapia with watercress and oyster leaf. A combination of strong flavoured fish from the ocean with sweeter, soft freshwater fish. Oyster leaf was a revelation, a little leaf that really does taste like fresh oysters and adds to the freshness of the dish. Ice leaf has a fresh flavor with a juicy, crunchy mouthfeel. Presentation of this dish, along with all the others, is exquisite.



Final flavours:

– **Cheese selection:** Slivers of Comté from Fromagerie Charles Arnaud that has been matured for 36 months. The flavour is concentrated, with aromas of brown butter and roasted nuts, and a sweet finish. This was the first time I had ever tasted this famous, noble cheese.

or

– **Selection of five local and European cheeses:** A choice of five different cheeses from an extensive range on the cheese trolley, served with condiments and a range of freshly baked breads.

– **First frost:** Forelle pear filled with ivoire chocolate and flavoured with tonka bean extract. This dish is the duchess of deserts, delighting and surprising with every spoonful. Jugs of extra white chocolate sauce were much in demand.



or

– **Smart tease:** Dark Valrhona chocolate with colourful mini macarons served like the precious hand-held desert dropped by an overeager child in Paris. Playful in concept and charming in execution.

Chantel begins research on the new menu a full season in advance, so at the start of summer she was already conceptualising the autumn

menu. Some ideas change radically during the research and development phase, and others simply work first time. This menu has a number of charming local ingredients, such as the ice leaf, suurvygies and oyster leaf. These are interwoven with classic French cuisine and her signature pretty edible flowers.

Sommelier Germain Lehodey provided a tour of the impressive wine cellar, which is a gold mine of carefully selected local and imported estates. Meals may be paired with local or international wines, and each varietal has its own glass to further enhance the experience.

Co-owner Mari Dartnall, Chantel's mother, is the most charming of hosts. She and her team warmly and deftly manage the procession of dishes, the many questions of ingredients and preparation methods, and the rising excitement of diners as the meal gathers momentum.

A meal at Mosaic at the Orient encourages total immersion in the experience, a baptism of the senses. And we haven't even discussed the exquisite Art Deco dining spaces, exotic and luxurious hotel décor, abundant flora and fauna, and seriously large collection of original artwork!

Sommelier Germain Lehodey, co-owner Mari Dartnall and chef patron Chantel Dartnall

Mosaic at the Orient
Francolin Conservation Area
Elandsfontein
Crocodile River Valley
Pretoria

Tel: 012 371 2902/3/4



Email:

chantel@restaurantmosaic.com

mari@the-orient.net

Website:

<http://www.restaurantmosaic.com>

<http://www.the-orient.net>

