

CRUSH

MOSAIC AT THE ORIENT LAUNCHES TABULA RASA FOR AUTUMN/WINTER 2017



Tabula Rasa is the name of award-winning chef Chantel Dartnall's stunning new autumn/winter menu for 2017 at Restaurant Mosaic at the Orient, rated as one of the finest restaurants in Africa.

The menu – the Latin phrase *Tabula Rasa* refers to a blank slate and anything existing undisturbed in its original pure state – has a number of African inspired dishes and again features the chef's signature Botanical Cuisine, using only the best seasonal produce with Dartnall taking her cue from nature.

One such dish is *African Aromas*, where Dartnall focuses on authentic African tastes from her environment and which include rooihartbees and madumbi (an indigenous starchy vegetable), combined with the scent of soetdoring smoke.

Says Dartnall: "It is striking how every city has its own unique smell. Stepping off the plane in Bangkok, the aroma of exotic spice permeates the air, while Paris smells of humanity – reminding me of closely packed bodies in the metro stations. Returning home from our travels, I always look forward to that first whiff of Gauteng's unique scent in mid-winter, a mix of veld fire smokiness and the sweet aromas of Acacia wood burning. This is us – the exotic smell of Africa... of home. With this dish, I want to tell the story of my home – the abundance of our wildlife, the exotic tastes and aromas of our open spaces and the sweet smokiness of our campfires."

Another dish – *Where The River Meets The Sea* – is inspired by her secret hideaway at the coast and features a composition of tilapia, a sweet freshwater fish, along with the saltwater halibut and oyster leaf.

Dartnall describes her inspiration for *Soupe du Jour*: "Soup of the day not only saves the chef's budget, but also provides the opportunity to toss anything and everything that was left over from yesterday into a pot and dish it up to your patrons under an important sounding name! But, what if we turn the idea around and present a humble soup with noble ingredients and decadent flavours, tempting the palate with a soft creaminess and exploding flavours? In this regard, we are delighted to present cauliflower cream soup permeated with earthy autumn flavours and richness, brussels sprouts filled to bursting with creamy foie gras mousse and black perigord truffle."

It truly is a magnificent combination of a few ingredients that combine to create a real "Wow" moment on first taste.

Le Canard teams locally sourced duck breast with vygies and plum confit. Says Dartnall: "I have always loved vygies – in spring, after the rains, they bring a riot of neon-like colour to what previously appeared to be a barren landscape. I vividly recall childhood memories of street vendors selling little parcels of wet newspaper bundles of Bokbaai vygies and Granny making preserves from what we called "kougoed" – the dried flowers. This has been my favourite snack since my childhood, known as a delicacy as long ago as 1685, when the colonists observed the Khoikhoi using this plant and eating its fruits."

Restaurant Mosaic's desserts are equally tantalising – choose from the *SmartTease* – inspired during a moment in Paris when Dartnall saw a young child drop a smartie-covered ice-cream cone on the pavement – to the autumnal *First Frost*, a wonderfully constructed and gorgeously moreish dish comprising pear, chocolate and tonka.

Of course Restaurant Mosaic's famous cheese trolley – including a Charles Arnaud 36-month matured French Comté – as well as their extensive bread and butter selection remains part of the Mosaic magic on the autumn menu.

There is a choice of four *Tabula Rasa* menus – the Grande Degustation, the Market Degustation as well as the pescatarian and vegetarian options. Diners can partake of the sommelier's wine pairing as well as a non-alcoholic pairing with drinks specially chosen to complement the meal.

Says Dartnall: "Since ancient times, food has had a magical connection. It was left as offerings to the gods, used as protection for a new home or feasted on to celebrate the changing seasons. Some of these traditions still continue today and with the artful use of the correct ingredients, we are able to calm or inspire individuals, becoming an alchemist of old."

The cover of the new menu depicts a painting titled *Pavlovsk* by Russian art nouveau artist, Alexander Golovin, expressing Dartnall's love for the art nouveau movement which is echoed in the interior of Restaurant Mosaic.