



ALL TOGETHER. Creating a degustation menu is as easy as researching what textures and flavours work well together in a dish, or an entire meal.
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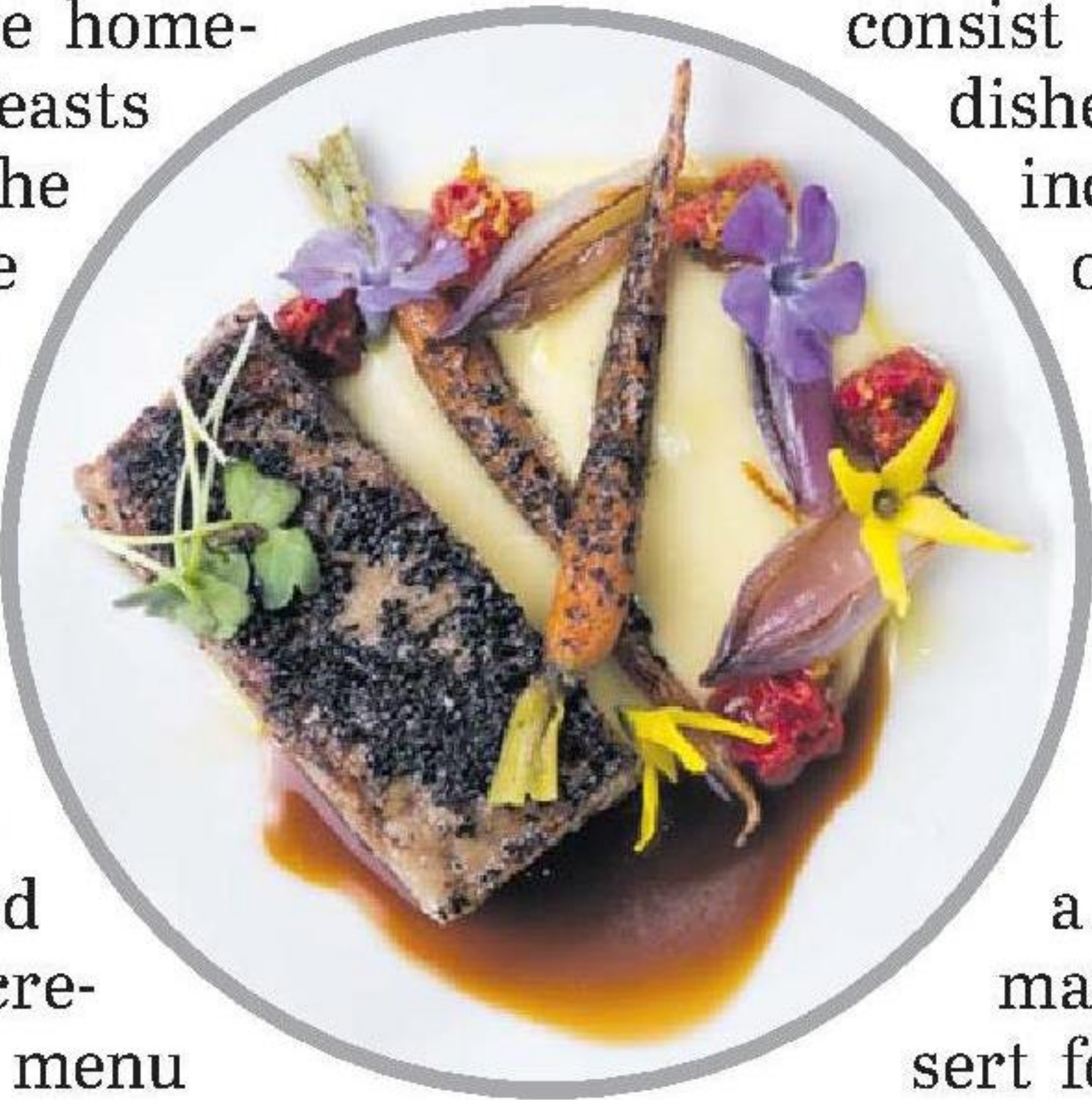
Digesting degustation

DIVERSITY: SERIES OF DIFFERENT TASTES

➔ ‘The food can be quite complex, or as simple as your mom’s macaroni and cheese.’

Adriaan Roets

If you started this year with the resolution to create more home-cooked feasts that rival the plates that emerge from the kitchens of Rueben Rifel and Grégory Zzarnecki – it’s smart to start simple. By knowing the ins and outs of food degustation – or creating the perfect menu – it’s easy to get on your way. Degustation’s literal translation is taste, but it also employs the idea of presenting a plate of food that is cohesive and works



larger narrative. Think of it as fine-tuning the food you cook and editing it to form a whole – or a series of tastes that’s different, or gives a full spectrum of your culinary prowess. Top chefs like Chantal Dartnell from Restaurant Mosaic have been using the degustation method for years, seasonally offering a grande degustation and market degustation menu. Degustation can be anything from five to 20 courses which consist of tiny, sample dishes which can include many, or just one desired sensory component. For her market menu, Dartnell presents an amuse bouche, a first course, main course dessert followed by coffee and petit fours. The grande menu includes an amuse bouche, four first courses, a remise and bouche (palette cleanser), a main course, a cheese

coffee course. This might seem like a heavy task, but there is a way to manage it. “The food can be quite complex, or in fact as simple as your mom’s macaroni and cheese – as long as the skills, techniques and, most importantly, flavours are true,” says Marlise Whelan, chef lecturer at Capital Hotel School. To understand the concept better, Whelan shares these tips when designing a degustation dish – or a whole menu. **FLAVOURS** The flavours should be intense seeing that the dish is small. The different components’ flavours should complement each other. Whelan suggests a starter like foie gras, toasty brioche, grilled peaches and a noble late harvest reduction. **TEXTURES** Textures promote mouth feel to help the overall experience. To achieve this, you should consider cooking methods and techniques



(spherification, foaming, leathers, jellies, etc.). One suggestion from Whelan is tomato soup with celery pearls made with gelatin.

FOOD GROUPS Protein, starch and vegetables. The richness will play a role in determining the correct amount of courses. Whelan’s ideal main course perfectly captures using a variety of these groups, with a rack of lamb, pommes fondant, wild mushroom ragout, root vegetables with a demi-glace. **COLOURS** Dishes should look appealing. The perfect experience combines smell and sight – which culminates in an impressive first bite. A degustation meal is a theatrical experience. From the first dish to the very last – it leads up to a highlight. Impressive last moments can include petit fours or Whelan’s lavender madeleines, macaroni