

A GORGEOUS LIFE BLOG

a gorgeous life

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EAT DRINK & BE MERRY FOOD

Del Mar *Modern Mexican*

JANUARY 25, 2016 BY CANDICE BRESLER



I didn't have a December holiday. A family medical emergency saw me hurtling from 2015 into 2016, with a little added sleep deprivation and a low immune system thrown in for kicks.



As such, I will be making up for the lack of holiday over the next two months. Restaurants, fun things – and two trips planned for February – my holiday is just going to be somewhat delayed. We've had an open invitation to visit Del Mar, the new Mexican restaurant on the Camps Bay strip, and decided a trip down to the seaside would bring the happy holiday vibes to our weekend.

Owned by Bukhara, who also owns Haiku, Del Mar elegant and refined, allowing the food to speak for itself. Offering a comprehensive menu, the food is broken up into various categories – with ceviche holding its own, followed by antojitos ('little cravings'), plates of local Mexican street food, para la mesa (essential accompaniments for the table), platos principales and more.



Del Mar Modern Mexican



 **DEL MAR**
AUTHENTIC MODERN MEXICAN

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The restaurant is situated on the 1st floor, next to blues. While it can seat 90 people, booking is recommended, especially if you want to secure a sought-after table next to the expansive windows. With a cool sea breeze blowing in, and views of beachgoers, palm trees and local buskers, its position affords diners an even better view than restaurants on street level.

Decor is minimal, verging on non-existent. Charcoal walls, heavy wooden chairs and white table cloths are defining features. The only touch of personality is seen if you look up – with beautiful copper, oversized light-bulbs and exposed beams in the ceiling. The down-played decor makes it easier for the food to take centre stage – which is exactly what it did.

We started with margaritas, and a selection of para la mesa to enjoy with corn chips. Namely, guacamole, frijoles nero (black beans pureed with epazote) and a selection of salsas.





Next, for the *Vie*, was a trio of ceviche. You know they take this speciality seriously, as they offer eight different varieties. He was sent the fine fish option, a trio containing leche de tigre and corn, onion, lime and fiery chipotle and jalapeño, coriander and lemon. While I skipped this round, I had absolutely no complaints, as it was such a joy to photograph. The colours were just incredible. Chatting to our waiter, he mentioned that the philosophy behind the restaurant might not appeal to all diners. Food comes in smaller portions - even main courses - allowing tables to share food and flavours. Not quite tapas, but also not the heavy, stodgy Mexican food our palates have become accustomed to.

A note on salsa, guacamole and side dishes - they aren't included in the price of a dish. The guacamole costs £50 and is enough to supply four people as an accompaniment, and you're looking at around £25 each per salsa. Considering the quality of the salsas, I understand why they aren't lumped together with every dish - they deserve to be savoured separately too.



I have it on good authority from the *Mi* that the ceviche was an absolute winner. Next, pork belly, or *pascuita de puerco*. Served with chipotle and a jalapeño glaze, it was sweet, spicy and incredibly tender. To give you an indication of portion sizes, the pork below was a "bite craning" and not a main course-sized portion.





My "little craving" came in the form of vegetarian tajitos pollo - crisp, fried tacos, filled with baby marrows and topped with ranchero sauce, red onion and coriander. Normally served with cheese on top, I asked for it to be omitted in order to make the dish vegan. It was a little spicier than I anticipated, but filled any craving I had for comfort food. The perfect balance of crispy and chewy, a pile of these would be the perfect accompaniment to a movie night at home. Mentally picturing the idea of Del Mar delivers on food.



Little and I shared a main course of calabacines y hongos - mushroom and zucchini fajitas. A generous portion of fried exotic mushrooms, peppers and zucchini is served in a beautiful ceramic bowl, accompanied by guacamole and frijoles negro. The soft corn tortillas are served separately for you to make your own taco. We were given a selection of additional salsas, in order to further play around with the different flavour combinations. We had a few favourites - including the usual chipotle, verde tomatillo and Pico de Gallo - but a word of warning about the Habanero. While it is packed with flavour and deliciously smoky... it packs a punch. If you're going to order it, make sure you have enough food to try and absorb the burn afterwards.





I loved having the freedom of making my own tacos and seeing what flavours I enjoyed the most. Luke and I shared this main course, and couldn't finish it. While we did have a few dishes beforehand, I think I could just finish this dish if I'd eaten nothing else.

If you're looking for a place to go with friends, down jugs of frozen margaritas and live off cheap tacos drowned in cheese - then this is not the place for you. However, if you want to experience fine Mexican cuisine, complex flavours and obsessive attention to detail - including sauces that take days to prepare - then I'd recommend booking at Del Mar immediately.



While it has only been open for a few months, I don't see it being long before it follows in the footsteps of its older siblings Bukhara and Haku, and starts collecting the awards. Don't say I didn't warn you.



INSIDER *Tips*

WE ASKED FOUR OF CAPE TOWN'S MOST POPULAR BLOGGERS TO GIVE US THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE FOUR THINGS THAT CAPE TOWNIANS WOMEN ARE MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT – FOOD, WINE, LIFESTYLE AND FASHION! EACH LADY WAS CHALLENGED TO USE HER SPECIALITY KNOWLEDGE TO GIVE US THE TUCKED AWAY, HIDDEN PLACES AND SPECIAL SPACES THAT ONLY AN INSIDER WOULD KNOW WHERE THEY ARE, GIVING ALL THEIR SECRETS AWAY...

THE WINE SNOB THE ACCIDENTAL BLOGGER AND OTHER STORIES

By *Saharneh Mollana* author of *Beachside*

Bubbles and Borealis's charms and terror dominate on wine and unmissable taste sensations – I simply remember my favourite things and then I feel moved to record and share the experience. Come of my favourite wine encounters in the Cape have included long tables, whereas others have been moments where I've found myself enamoured by unexpected taste sensations.

BEST IN MASTERY
In The Devil Wears Prada, Emily Adams. Of course, I plan my whole year around this. For me, the Cape Wine Masters' Open Auction and the pre-auction tasting are true. They are all of this. Tasting wines guided by 60 of the



best winemakers in the Cape. In one room is like watching the Great Renaissance Masters hand-pick and display their paintings. Another excellent lesson in history is a tasting with Vinea Basica, the founder of The Vinea Basica wine Co-operative in Constantia.

BEST IN COOL CLIMATE
My baby sister and I took a road trip to The Ben Wine Festival last year. We were up in a narrow among the tall trees at Dooenboom Guest Farm and Country Cottage. Our journey wandered my love for Stranveld Estate. The vineyard is also introduced me to The Drie Winke! The Salt House. Our voyage to Gauru! About's Southern Most vineyards also introduced me to The Gauru Peninsula Chenin Blanc, which if wine is being served pairs phenomenally with Saccaris.

BEST IN TRY THIS WITH FOOD

On a Hamilton Russell's background in food technology proved itself to be suitable on a plate at year long. Her cook, a year on a Cape Wine Estate is the genre balance between gourmet and home-comforts. She created a genre cotta with me that proved itself to be the 'meat' in the meat-and-veggie 'Vally'.

Hermanus is home to Cordon Wine's paintings that are as much a treat for Taster as they are for the owner. Turner from Orkney, but just as recently, Fleur du Cap offers a full-on wine painting of its site. Unlabeled range that originates with the services at Die Bergkloof in Stellenbosch. JC La Roub, in Devon Valley provides a classic pairing of oysters and bite-sized mussels that afterwards in every way of the Restaurant at Grand Provance in Stellenbosch. Chef Owen Buisson's province on a plate is a living testament to The Estate's commitment to excellence. Tasting at Mission Estate are always a delight – where guests encounter the unique taste of oenophile in your mouth as they pair cheese, wine and lobster.

BEST IN 'I NEVER EXPECTED IT'

Laverie's reputation regarding quality accords. I was people to have a revelation when they taste these wines. "These wines" refer to the Margate Cape Pinot Noir and Chenin Blanc that the oenophile wine lover's repository made and self-aided. The Egg-in-grown wines are more natural, with the philosophy that low alcohol and little intervention result in wines that are bound to leave an impression on those that they encounter.

There also Garagiste like Blackwater Wine. Francois Healden's has produced the exceptional Blackwater Pinot Noir which is composed of Gargais, Gargais and Gargais. Similarly, Duncan Gargais's Garage Pinot 2011 is an intriguing blend of these outdoors. My most recent surprise has been Marianne's Wines, encountered during Tasting the Vines: New Day Wine Route.



THE FOODIE SO LITTLE TIME, SO MUCH TO EAT THE BEST OF CAPE TOWN'S FOOD SCENE

By *Geoffrey Bester* author of *A Surrogate Life*

While I count myself lucky to call Cape Town 'home', living in such a vibrant and cosmopolitan city comes with its own set of challenges – so, we're simply overwhelmed by choice. Whether you're looking for a spot to enjoy brunch, a casual meal or a special night out, there are endless options for every pasta and noodle. I'm tired to try something new! I've included my top four must-visit spots in this city.

BRUNCH AT STEINBERG'S BISTRO SIXTEEN82

As my brunch is one of my favorite meals and treats – and Steinberg's Bistro Sixteen82 is the perfect place to indulge. While they offer a variety of breakfast and brunch dishes, I recommend the Egg Benedict (served at 875), two perfectly poached eggs, served on a potato and herb salad, covered with silky smooth hollandaise. Served alongside a slow roasted tomato. As I'm not quite enough,



it comes with a side of home-made pork belly bacon. I'd suggest going out and enjoying it with a glass of their 1682 Chatterbox IACD.

A WANDER THROUGH KIRSTENBOSS'S FOOD AND CRAFT MARKET

While the botanical gardens are famous in their own right, we recently discovered their food and craft market which takes place on the last Sunday of the month. Taking place around the stone cottage on Thebes Drive, you'll find everything from second-hand books, to local crafts and curios – and, of course, delicious food. From mince to pizza, pulled beef ribs to Belgian waffles – it's Sunday lunch, with a twist. I'd recommend making a day of it, and enjoying one of the garden's Guest Concessions afterwards.

LUNCH AT DEL MAR MODERN MEXICAN

A new addition to the Camps Bay strip, Del Mar serves Mexican food like you've never seen it before. Not a churrito-fest here, it's a sophisticated, refined Mexican and innovative attention to detail. Offering a comprehensive menu, the food is broken up into various categories – with creative 'highlights' on offer, followed by an 'all-day' menu. I've enjoyed a taste of local Mexican street food, plus a menu (optional accompaniment for the sake), plus a comprehensive menu. It gets my vote for the best Mexican food in Cape Town.

DINNER AT LA COLOMBE

If you're looking to celebrate a special occasion, or simply want an unforgettable night of fine dining, then La Colombe should be top of your list. Led by Scott Brown – the 2014 Best Out Of the Year – the team at La Colombe serves exquisite cuisine, in a warm and sophisticated atmosphere. We're fortunate to ask our lady chef, and I can safely say that I enjoyed the best meal of my life at La Colombe – no real secret here!

THE FASHIONISTA SHOP THE CAPE

By *Vanessa King* author of *Living in the Moment*

Having just moved to Cape Town, I've found a new local appreciation for just how amazing vibrant, creative and exciting Cape Town is. From its new found coffee culture with designer decor, to the best furniture and fashion design scene, the talent and creative energy of the city is words cannot describe. Shopping Cape in Cape Town is a fantastic spot for a delicious, organic breakfast to start the day, and I love how

the rustic, homey decor inside and in the garden is forever changing and inspiring. I always order an iced latte with lots of butter. Heading to the outdoor markets, Mission Boutique in Constantia Village Courtyard is my go-to for international designer gear from the likes of Vivian and Maritima to my absolute favourite Karen Della Poggio. Buy what you love in style. Slip into a pair of stylish and wear as comfy heels of Cinnamon plump in lush leather and easy to wear shoes and coats.

The Water Shed at the V&A Waterfront houses all my favourite apparel and accessories, from one-off designer Misstake bags and accessories to edgy metal jewelry and colorful coastal pieces. You just have to own a piece from years ago. My favourite spot to browse and just get lost in, is Moroccan Warehouse, corner of Commercial and Buitendijk St. Find something special for your home from leather pouffes to hand painted

side tables. I can never resist the chunky Moroccan basket necklaces. A favourite for the home, blankets and throws – visit Lunge for sumptuous cottons and woven fabrics. Their new bamboo infinity scarf is a winter must-have. Super soft, versatile and cozy! Check out the city glass about Magisfort.

You're certainly not seen it all, but you've browsed the creative quarter that is Woodstock. From The Woodstock Exchange to the Car Show, all these shops of local talent to be approached. Do pop into one of my favourites, The Fashion Collector. Just stepped down a fashion designer heritage. Some retailers I can't wait to visit on the streets of Dubai.

After your particular shopping tour, do pop into mine for a much deserved beverage. Your feet will thank you. Enter for the drive or the Express more next door.



I've also included two bonus, honorary mentions at the bottom of this post – for Open Door and Pot Luck Club, who had to be left out of the original article due to space constraints. Some of these spots I've loved for years, and a few have been more recent discoveries. So, without further ado, my favourite places to eat in Cape Town.

Brunch at Bistro Sixteen82