

# Savouring the very best of



TV chef **Brian Turner** takes a journey to the heart of the Cape's thriving culinary scene

I do love the Cape. I've been going for around 15 years. There's a wonderful climate, and the produce and cooking is getting better and better. At the moment this is being led mainly by two chefs: London-born Luke Dale-Roberts, of The Test Kitchen, and a guy from Dublin called Liam Tomlin, of Chefs Warehouse & Canteen, who I know well. Along with a number of others, these two are helping to create a great deal of interest in Cape Town, which is really buzzing gastronomically.

The Cape just spills over with natural ingredients. For example, we visited the township of Khayelitsha, outside Cape Town, with a community development organisation called Uthando, which runs tours ([uthandosasa.org](http://uthandosasa.org)). We met a lady called Mama Christina, who has reclaimed land on this strip of near desert using compost from Cape Town, and is growing great, fresh produce for chefs in the city. It's social mobility through food.

Even though I'm a professional chef I'm not a food snob. I love going to a chain restaurant called the Cape Town Fish Market in Tokai ([ctfm.co.za](http://ctfm.co.za)) and always have the tempura. It's simple but I love it. The food doesn't have to be complicated or sophisticated but what it has to have are ingredients that, from seed to table, are treated with respect.

There were three restaurants that really stood out during my stay. I had the 10-course tasting menu at Luke's Test Kitchen in Cape Town's Old Biscuit Mill ([thetestkitchen.co.za](http://thetestkitchen.co.za)). It's a great experience — I was there around three hours — and you take your time. Luke is in the kitchen and everyone knows what



they have to do. It's like a fine symphony, with him as the conductor.

There was curry-glazed kingklip, and smoked guinea fowl breast with foie gras: nice and moist, in strips, with lovely bursts of smoke. For Luke, it's all about the indigenous produce. His motto is flavour, flavour, flavour. Everything else falls into place around that.

A short walk away, on the top floor of the silo of an old mill, is The Pot Luck Club ([thepotluckclub.co.za](http://thepotluckclub.co.za)). There's lots of glass and it has great views of the mountains. The menu is in five sections, each with different tastes and flavours. I had one of my most memorable dishes there — a Cape Malay lentil dhaal with crispy calamari on top.

At the Chefs Warehouse & Canteen ([chefswarehouse.co.za](http://chefswarehouse.co.za)) the tables are not



**Tasteful experiences**  
Grand Dedale Country House, top; The Test Kitchen in Cape Town, above left; packing freshly grown produce for city dwellers in Khayelitsha township, above right

really built for comfort. They're narrow so you don't rest for long. You can't book but you can put your name on the chalk board and then pop out for a drink. It works well and makes dining more of a spontaneous experience.

While in Cape Town I stayed at Kensington Place, which was lovely: eight beautiful rooms set in a leafy suburb just below Table Mountain, surrounded by jacaranda trees. It was my little hideaway and its owner, Chris Weir, was my go-to guy when anything needed arranging.

When I said I was going to Wellington, around 45 minutes' drive from central Cape Town, for the second half of my trip, people warned that there wasn't really much there. But when you search, you realise that's not the case. South Africa is a country of farmland and here

you have so many passionate producers.

I stayed at the Grand Dedale Country House, a wonderful hotel in the middle of nowhere. Most people ate on the terrace, enjoying the beautiful surroundings and the isolation. In the early evening, all the guests would meet for a glass of fizz.

There's a vineyard on site and you can have tastings. I dined with Angelo and Tina, who run the hotel. When they got married, the vineyard made them their very own blend of wine and we drank this as we dined.

Angelo was kind enough to organise a programme for me. I visited Bosman Family Vineyards ([bosmanwines.com](http://bosmanwines.com)), which along with a few others in the area produces 85 per cent of the vines that are used in South African wine production. So it's the cradle of the South African wine industry. I did a tasting and got to see how the vines were grafted, using skills garnered over five generations.

At Bontebok Ridge Reserve ([bontebokridge.co.za](http://bontebokridge.co.za)), you can go on game drives. I had a tour with Tom Turner, the owner, and saw eland, springbok, wildebeest and wild boar. We even saw a Cape fox, which Tom was so excited about — he'd not seen one for two years. We finished with a braai (barbecue): wild boar and lamb sausages, a big eland steak, stuffed tomatoes — all quite simple, as it should be. We stood by the lake with the setting sun reflecting in the water. We were just 50 miles from the centre of Cape Town but it felt like we were in the middle of nowhere.

All the producers are real characters. At the Upland Organic Estate



# the Winelands



**Stirring excitement**  
The Pot Luck Club, top;  
smoked guinea fowl  
with foie gras from The  
Test Kitchen, above.  
Right, Liam Tomlin



([organicwine.co.za](http://organicwine.co.za)), I met a veterinary surgeon whose hobby is producing brandies and grappas. It was really rustic, with masses of barrels, all chalk-marked – 15 years, 20 years. I had a taste and it was pretty potent. I needed a nap before dinner that day, I can tell you.

And then there was the mozzarella man, Wayne Rademeyer, a gentle giant who runs Buffalo Ridge ([buffaloridge.withtank.com](http://buffaloridge.withtank.com)). Many people make mozzarella with cow's milk but for it to be true mozzarella, it needs to be buffalo milk. It was great to see all these water buffalo, around 200 in total. Wayne made a salad caprese for me to try the cheese – it was truly delicious.

This was definitely one of the most memorable of the 20 or so trips I've made to South Africa. Doors were opened; I did things I wouldn't normally do; I met so many passionate people. I can't wait to go back. Everything is moving forward so fast gastronomically, but you sense no one is forgetting their roots. As Jan, Liam's wife at the Chefs Warehouse & Canteen, said of the food: "It is what it is – and it's delicious."

That, to me, perfectly encapsulates the Cape's culinary scene.

**Brian Turner was talking to Duncan Craig**

● Brian travelled as a guest of Africa Travel, which has a seven-night gourmet holiday, with four nights at Kensington Place and three nights at Grand Dedale, from £1,325pp, B&B. The price includes British Airways flights and Bidvest car hire (020 7843 3583, [africatravel.co.uk](http://africatravel.co.uk))

## Down to a vine art: The best Wine Country retreats

### THE LAST WORD FRANSCHHOEK, FRANSCHHOEK

Tucked off Franschhoek's main street and within walking distance of the eateries and bistros for which the village is famed, this Huguenot-style villa has a high rate of returning guests, and with good reason. There are just 10 large bedrooms, set around charming gardens, all with complimentary minibars and two with access to private pools. Staff have gained a reputation for superb levels of service: assisting with restaurant bookings and sightseeing ideas are the norm. From £80pp a night, B&B

### OUDE WERF HOTEL, STELLENBOSCH

Welcoming guests since 1802 to its prime location in the heart of stunning Stellenbosch, Oude Werf is South Africa's oldest hotel. It may have recently undergone a major renovation programme but the modern traveller is still able to stay in one of the beautiful, centuries-old rooms. Outdoor breakfasts in the courtyard are a highlight, as is the welcoming swimming pool, but the big bonus is being able to walk out of the front door to numerous restaurants and bars, something of a novelty in the wine region. From £45pp a night, B&B

### LA RESIDENCE, FRANSCHHOEK

The Grande Dame of the Winelands, La Residence sets the standard which others strive to reach. Often lauded as the country's best hotel, the service levels are as legendary as the luxury interiors. Set slightly back from the village, "La Res" enjoys acres of open space and wonderful views of the surrounding vineyards, olive trees and mountains. Guests can opt to stay in the main hotel or in one of the private villas, some of which have their own swimming pools. From £190pp a night, B&B

### GRANDE ROCHE HOTEL, PAARL

A National Monument, local landmark and treasured property, this elegant five-star hotel is located just outside Paarl. Dating from the 18th century, the beautiful guest rooms are dotted throughout the gardens, which also contain two swimming pools, tennis courts, wellness centre, historic wedding chapel and an award-winning restaurant and bistro. Although many famed wine estates are on its doorstep, the property also produces its own wines. From £70pp a night, B&B

### HAWKSMOOR HOUSE, STELLENBOSCH

Located on a working farm close to Stellenbosch, Hawksmoor is an old Cape Dutch homestead which has been restored to its former glory. Guest accommodation is split between four historic buildings, formerly home to farm workers and their machinery, but now offering deluxe rooms with wonderful views over the neighbouring farms. Breakfasts can be taken on the stoep (veranda), which overlooks the pool and gardens. From £45pp a night, B&B



### RICKETY BRIDGE MANOR HOUSE, FRANSCHHOEK

The renowned Rickety Bridge wine estate in the shadow of the Dassenberg mountains is home to this boutique guesthouse, which occupies a restored 19th century Cape Dutch building and has just three rooms. Walks in the gardens or a game of boules can be complemented by a wine-tasting or lunch. The estate is on the Franschhoek wine tram route (pictured inset) so there is no need to drive to reach other estates. From £50pp a night, B&B

● All of the above can be booked with Africa Travel, which offers a best-price guarantee on any like-for-like itinerary (020 7843 3583, [africatravel.co.uk](http://africatravel.co.uk))

