

Good, better, best



By Brian Berkman

Bukhara has long been regarded by cuisine purists as the definitive Indian cuisine this side of Delhi. Its North Indian offering attracted the great and the good not to mention a host of politicians who would queue for lunch.

Those were the early days when Church Street, Cape Town was their only address and it was the most sought after Indian dining destination.

A decade on, the restaurant has expanded its offering around South Africa and as far a field as London. With increased supply comes reduced demand.

Cleverly they've launched a special lunch menu which again is drawing in the crowds and makes it possible to enjoy a varied lunch (I loved the chicken in cheese Thali) with dal makhani and aloo jeera served with a naan bread for R69. A significant saving against ordering the same items a la carte.

Church Street, Cape Town. 021-424-0000

Bodega restaurant on the Dornier wine estate in Stellenbosch replaces the famed La Masseria. The winery's curvaceous roof mirrors beautifully in the koi-stocked reflective pool, providing a contemporary contrast against the traditional Herbert Baker manor house.

The long and deep stoep is the perfect place to spend the afternoon and the gracious mountain views sufficient to soothe the long wait for food.

According to waiter Ryno, the menu changes daily based on what's freshly available. We loved the flammekuchen (R45) (think pizza without the cheese).

Ours had bacon, caramelized onions and portabellini mushrooms and was plenty as a main course. I can't think of a pizza I've enjoyed more. Its success is in the

crisp lightness of the flatbread, and a rich sweetness on the tongue.

Fabulous. The mezze platter (R65) is recommended for munching over your first bottle of wine. We had the delicious Dornier Donatus 2006 (R104) which withstood the robust flavours of the sun-dried tomatoes and olives; handmade humus, melon and watermelon balls, and parma ham with delicious breads.

Obviously a complex wine as it was as enjoyable with the linguini with gorgonzola cream, pears, baby spinach and walnuts. (R59). JP enjoyed his lamb burger with saffron aioli and fat chips (R65). Bodega is justifiably popular.

*Dornier, Blaauwklippen Road, Stellenbosch .021-880-0557.
www.dornier.co.za*

The Sparkling Waters Hotel in the Magaliesberg mountains of Gauteng is a charming older property that it still well run by hands-on owners.

It has become well known for two adjoining businesses - Magaliesberg Canopy Tours (014-535-0150) and, the infinitely more sedate, Sparkling Health Spa. The first is an adventure experience for those who like the idea of hurtling towards the rock face on a foefie slide.

The experience takes three hours and no doubt your partner will bring home a DVD to allow you to relive their experience scream by scream.

The spa is a far better proposition. Start with a 30 minute sun deck back massage overlooking the tree tops. (R160) I gave my hands and feet a much needed boost, but the next time I visit I'll book the 3 1/2 hour break-away package that includes an aroma steam bath and Jacuzzi, hydrating facial, tropical foot massage, classic manicure, lavender back massage and use of the sundeck. More masculine options are also available

*014-535-0019.
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Bodega restaurant's Moroccan-inspired interior.