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New world charm

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Having been invited to lunch at Dornier's Bodega restaurant just outside Stellenbosch (opened recently in time for spring), I decided to take my friend Kerry along. I know she appreciates food, she's from the surrounding area (Somerset West) and of course she's always brilliant entertainment.

On our arrival, I was delighted when offered a wine tasting before entering the restaurant. We soon made friends with the wine tender, who was also from Somerset West, and we felt relaxed instantly.

The whites (White and Chenin Blanc) did not prove to my taste, a little too dry for my liking, and the same going for the Rosé (although Kerry enjoyed it). The reds on the other hand were spectacular.

Although, the more expensive varietals under the Dornier label



The Dornier Cellar

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were the best — Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinotage — the Cocoa Hill label (the ready to drink version) was remarkably good. The little legend behind the label is, that there once was a feared pirate, who lived in the Cape and named his territory (the hill visible from the farm) Cocoa Hill.

Kitchen comfort

As we approached the dining room a little 'merrier' than when we arrived, we passed the almost clinical kitchen, where we could see the food being prepared. Kerry eyed out the freshly baked homemade bread and I couldn't wait to try some.

You would hardly say that the restaurant is one of the oldest buildings in Stellenbosch. A rustic new-age farmhouse feel pervades, while the rather large room smiles with happiness and the earth-coloured walls welcome you in. An additional open-air veranda adjacent to the restaurant has views of the Stellenbosch Mountains, as well as the Dornier wine cellar — an architectural marvel.

On a rather warm Sunday afternoon, the starters looked the most appealing. A huge fan of sweet potato and rocket (instead of the 80's butter lettuce), I had to try the sweet potato and rocket salad with cashew and ginger dressing. A sizeable portion descended upon me and I was in salad heaven.

Chef, Tullishe Le Roux, says she sources only the freshest locally produced ingredients, and I could tell from the salad.

Kerry chose the Parma ham risotto balls with strawberry coulis pipettes. They came with little test tubes of strawberry coulis and seemed like a fun way to start a meal.



Also on the starters menu was roast tomato and basil soup, Pan-fried squid with julienne vegetables and springbok carpaccio with rocket, balsamic reduction and parmesan shavings. The mezze platter with Parma ham, olives, feta, sundried tomatoes, red onion marmalade and hummus, sounded enticing as well.

Prices of an average starter ranged from R30 to R50, with the sweet potato salad priced at R42, and the Parma ham balls at R39.

Still thinking about the bread we flagged down a waitress, and managed to order a bread basket which came with some caramelised onion loaf, melt-in-your-mouth homemade rolls, as well as one or two other varieties. Having just been to France, I was still on a bit of a bread binge and couldn't get enough of Bodega's basket.

Bulging bellies

The mains menu ranged from linguini, lamb and seared calves liver, to pan-fried salmon, grilled duck breast, roast pork belly and rib eye steak. Not a bad assortment for the more carnivorous patron.

Kerry chose the duck breast on Jasmine rice with Thai green curry sauce. It worked surprisingly well, and I have to admit I was rather jealous having opted for the more conservative option — salmon trout on asparagus, new potatoes and orange salad with citrus dressing.

The duck was on offer for R85 and the salmon was priced at R80 — a hearty price for a Sunday lunch.

Suddenly our bellies were bulging and the idea of dessert seemed a little daunting, but as the cliché goes — 'there's always room for dessert'.

Unable to choose just one dessert, we decided to share two. The chocolate nut torte was heavy and didn't quite work with the almost too sour crème fraiche, while the assiette of desserts — tiramisu, meringue with lemon curd and rum truffles — was a little too small to share. Perhaps we should have tried the vanilla pancotta with strawberries or the Queen Vic cheese with spicy pear and chutney preserves.

All the desserts were priced at R35, except for the more decadent Queen Vic cheese (R45).

We relaxed in Bodega's comfy chairs for a while and enjoyed the awe-inspiring view of the mountains before heading back to Cape Town for an afternoon of less sophisticated rugby watching.

Bodega is open from 10am to 5pm daily. From 1 May to 30 September annually, the venue will be closed Monday and Tuesday. Booking is essential and functions facilities are available on occasion with due inquiry. For more information visit the web site at www.bodega.co.za or call +27 21 880 0557.

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