



De Oude Kraal Free State, SOUTH AFRICA

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

SOUTH AFRICA'S early immigration history mirrors that of North America, when early European settlers worked the land and learned how to make use of the natural resources around them. In different regions of North America, German, Irish, Dutch, Scandinavian and other groups not only shaped the future of the economy but also the recipe books of future generations. The same holds true in South Africa. The Afrikaner (descended from the Dutch) imprint is particularly strong, from the Free State and Bloemfontein area to Cape Town's winelands, and there are touches of tradition from the British, such as afternoon tea with a plush assortment of cakes and cookies.

Although the British and Afrikaner factions clashed during the Boer War between 1899 and 1902, traditions and recipes from each side peacefully coexist and move forward at De Oude Kraal Country Estate. The sixth-generation Merino sheep farm located an hour outside Bloemfontein has been reinvented as a resort that introduces visitors to a slice of South Africa beyond the cities, safari camps and coastal highways. It encompasses the original 1885 farmhouse, decorated in eclectic and elegant fashion, with two restaurants (Feast, for casual and a la carte dining, and De Oude Kraal Fine Dining); a delightful spa with its own dining area; horse stables and several old barn structures and newer buildings worked into different lodgings. There is also a cute shop selling a variety of wool toys and housewares adjoining Feast.

As the grounds are beautifully landscaped it's tempting to spend the day lounging under a large tree. The resort also offers outdoor activities for guests and day trippers that provide a taste of the Free State's quiet agricultural lifestyle. These include interaction with the farm's dogs and horses, Sunday *Braais* (South African barbecues, which started in response to local restaurants being closed under the area's "Blue Laws" restricting Sunday activities), luxuriant treatments and massages at the spa. The resort's signature is a light game drive, for a relaxing sundowner cocktail hour or a variation for families with kids who may be a bit

young for full-on safaris. Ostrich, sheep, springbok and other wildlife can be seen grazing in the grasslands.

Fourth-generation proprietors Gerhard and Marie Lombard, who grew up on the farm, lovingly maintain the original farmhouse, built by a German missionary named Saltzmann and expanded by family patriarch Judge A.J. Smit. It charms with separate dining rooms, some with open fireplaces and original antique furniture, and pieces from the owners' art collection. A five-course degustation dinner prepared by Marie's daughter, Marie-Louise Nel, is a hallmark of the establishment.

After working for several years as an attorney, Marie-Louise, who also grew up on the farm and picked up the culinary fundamentals from her mother, returned to the family business in 2016 to transform the resort's food program while remaining true to Free State country cooking traditions as well as those deriving from the property's years as a sheep farm. There are French and global techniques at play — gourmet lamb burgers are elevated with parmesan, cilantro, and a mozzarella stuffing; a zesty tomato jam adds sass to wood-fired pizza and slow-braised lamb neck. »

PHOTO OPPOSITE De Oude Kraal Main House.



SERVES 8-10

Wortelkoek

Carrot Cake

THIS RECIPE MAKES A two-layer cake. If you want to make the spectacular showstopper served at De Oude Kraal for the celebrations, make the cake recipe twice over and stack the four layers, trimming any domes from the first three layers. The icing recipe can be doubled and made in one batch.

Sugar 1 cup

Vegetable Oil 1 cup

Eggs 3 large

All-Purpose Flour
1½ cups

Baking Powder 2 tsp

Baking Soda 1 tsp

Cinnamon 2 tsp

P脉ed Banana
1½ cups

Grated Carrot 1 cup

1 PREHEAT the oven to 350°F.

2 WHISK the sugar, oil and eggs until creamy and pale.

3 ADD the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and baking soda. Mix to combine.

4 ADD the banana pulp and carrots and mix well.

5 PUT in two greased round cake pans and bake till a tester comes out clean, about 45-60 minutes.

Cream Cheese Icing

Butter 60 g, softened

Icing Sugar 500 g, sifted

Cream Cheese 250 g

Fresh Lemon Juice 80 ml

6 BEAT the butter and icing sugar together until creamy.

7 ADD the remaining ingredients and beat until smooth and easy to spread.

8 ICE the cake once it has cooled down and decorate with chopped pecan nuts and carrot slices dipped in sugar syrup and baked until crispy.



PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Dining in the wine cellar; The rustically beautiful spa; K-la-K server; Homestyle cooking at K-la-K; Horses on the property; Marie-Louise Nel's modern African cuisine; Nature-inspired decor in a suite.

« The menu reflects what's in season and helps support other businesses in the area. The process is also enhanced by the involvement of the farm staff, some of whose families have worked with the Lombards for four generations. The meal presented to us on a mid-fall evening (May in the Southern Hemisphere) began with a fine ostrich carpaccio graced with dried peaches and avocado. This was followed by a rich corn soup, and pasta with basil pesto citrus butter, pecans and pepperdew chiles. A halibut fish course and thinly sliced lamb rounded out the meal, with a deconstructed lemon meringue pie providing the all-important sweet coda. A wine list of 125 bottles offers many options for pairings, or a glass in the bar area. Nel's cuisine truly merits its recent American Express/AMEX dining award. 



De Oude Kraal
www.deoudekrall.com

Los Angeles-based writer ELYSE GLICKMAN's last story for TASTE & TRAVEL was about South Africa.



Good Clean Fun – K-la-K Car Wash

WHEN KEKE SUPI was growing up in Botswana, he was inspired by his father, who cooked for his family and for a living. But like other boys around the globe, Supi was fascinated with cars of every description. Washing them not only gave him a chance to make a little extra money, but also to get a closer look at their construction and aesthetics.

As an adult Supi adopted Botschabelo, Manguang (just outside Bloemfontein) as his hometown. With apartheid two decades in the past, he was moved to do his part to make it a better place, as the residents of Soweto and other black townships had done. After travelling the world and observing community-based businesses, he opened K-la-K Carwash in 2011, blending his various passions together while providing jobs for the community. Alongside the car wash, a cafeteria restaurant offers homespun stews, salads, and other dishes crafted from Supi's father's recipes. During the week, the show that goes with the dinner are the washes in progress, done by young men and women who love cars as much as Supi does. Come on the weekend, the suds provide the opening act for local musicians and DJs.

In the future, Supi hopes to add a hair salon and other necessary services to make K-la-K a one-stop shop for the community, a place to have a good time and a lesson in creative business models for anybody visiting. 



K-la-K Car Wash
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Bloemfontein, Free State 9323

