

# A taste of the new menu at The Kitchen at Maison

By  Ruth Cooper

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The Kitchen at Maison has always been one of my top restaurants to make a drive out to, a perfect spot to take a group of friends for lengthy and lazy lunching. Unique flavours and beautiful plating in their stunning restaurant or garden give this Franschhoek gem serious wow factor.

I was recently invited to the Chef's Table media event which gave us some insight as to what to expect from chef Arno Janse van Rensburg's new innovative menu.



**Honouring the ingredient**

The menu, which has been developed over five years, pays homage to the ethos of Maison which is a paired down non-frilly approach. Top quality ingredients, mostly sourced from the estate, that are honoured by their simplicity and restraint of processes.



“Each dish has been stripped down to its essence, using new cooking techniques that ensure flavours enhance their counterparts without upstaging them. Since fewer ingredients are used, the ingredients have to be the best and as fresh as possible.” ”

The new menu shows definite seafood, fermentation and Asian leanings. All the seven dishes we sampled were fresh and light and perfect for a warm summer's day underneath dappled shade with a bottle or two of the excellent Maison wine.





## Seafood simplicity

We started with the Asparagus, kreef, amasi (fermented milk) and trout roe. The most Instagram pretty of all the dishes, this tumble of ingredients was impossibly fresh and bright.



This was followed by thinly sliced swordfish atop charred cauliflower in a basil and ginger sauce. Deceptively simple, this dish was one of my favourites - its unassuming presentation hiding a riot of flavour beneath. The punchy and perfectly sour ginger and basil sauce was such a happy flavour marriage with the swordfish and cauliflower and currently has me salivating at the memory.





Next we were presented with smoked trout, white kimchi and fresh peas. Seriously uncomplicated cooking at its finest. A dish that makes you feel healthier just by looking at it.



## **New age steak tartare**

Dish number four was unique and one I might still need to wrap my head around a bit. Roughly minced raw beef and diced grapefruit was served with a sourdough waffle segment and aioli. A sort of new age steak tartare. I would recommend this as a starter to wake up your taste bud perceptions.



Next, we were treated to an Octopus tentacle with green mango, lime and coriander - some of my favourite flavour combinations. I loved this course even if the Octopus texture took a little getting used to.



This was followed by a dish that bridged savoury and dessert territory. Another perception-challenging flavour combination, this one included fresh peas, blueberries, kefir (a form of fermented milk from Russia) and coco nib. Who would have thought that chocolate flavours and peas would go together? Yet somehow it worked.



## Sweet endings

Last, and another of my favourite courses, was the dark chocolate with koji (a fungus used in Asian cuisines to ferment soybeans), hazelnut ice-cream and thinly sliced nectarine. A beautiful ending to a wonderful tasting.



The Kitchen at Maison is the perfect venue to impress - be it a loved one or a group of out-of-towners. You can't go wrong with a visit to this charming estate.

For more info or to make a booking go to [www.maisonestate.co.za/the-kitchen-restaurant](http://www.maisonestate.co.za/the-kitchen-restaurant)

*The Kitchen also offers First Friday at Maison – a monthly event that pairs a multi course menu with wine and live music.*

*When: First Friday of every month*

*Cost: R450 per person. (Includes starter, mains and dessert). Booking essential.*

## ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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