

SA's top food trends for 2016

 By [Abigail Donnelly](#)

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My team of judges and reviewers and I have spent the last few months criss-crossing the land to find the best restaurants in South Africa for the new [Eat Out magazine](#). We visited the old favourites, but also looked hard to find plenty of new, up-and-coming stand outs. It's an exciting time in food: unique eateries are popping up everywhere, offering the best in burgers, Mexican, tapas and street food. SA dining really is of world-class quality and I'm honoured and humbled to have experienced such excellence last year.

At the [top restaurants](#) chefs are telling stories and putting their philosophies on the plate. Some are cooking more simply, focussing on quality ingredients that become the hero.

Sustainability is also a focus going forward, and Eat Out will be teaming up with Woolworths in 2016 to recognise a restaurant that prioritises using sustainable fish and free-range meat, poultry and dairy; makes efforts to source local and seasonal produce; takes steps to limit food waste and save water and energy; and shows respect for the surrounding community.

In terms of sustainable seafood, things are looking up. I've hardly seen any imported salmon, and local hake is taking its turn in the spotlight. At [La Colombe](#) in Constantia, I loved [Chef of the Year Scot Kirton's](#) 'tin of tuna', which blew guests away at the Eat Out Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards last year. The tongue-in-cheek concept is a tin can that contains the most delicate Asian tuna tataki.



Tuna Tataki - Chef Scott Kirton of La Colombe

Earthier ingredients

As for earthier ingredients, bread and butter is getting more limelight, buttermilk is highlighting the fermentation trend in everything from dressings to desserts, and dairy is starring in dishes like the Bel Nori Forest Phantom cheese at [The Restaurant at Waterkloof](#) in Somerset West, which boasts a round of goat's cheese rolled in ash and served with slices of truffled pear and pistachio brittle.



Bel Nori Phantom Cheese - Chef Gregory Czarnecki of The Restaurant at Waterkloof

Floral notes like rose and jasmine are making an appearance, too. I've seen hibiscus glass (brittle clear caramel) broken into splinters, and as a fragrant powder scattered over desserts. The Alchemist's Infusion at [Restaurant Mosaic](#) in Pretoria stood out with its minimalist concept: a selection of flowers, from gladioli and rose to hibiscus and fennel, infused into an aromatic broth that's poured over three medallions of West Coast rock lobster. Phenomenal.

Pork is still big - cheek and jowls, slow-cooked pulled pork and belly - but beef is celebrated too in dishes like the beef done five ways at [Camphors at Vergelegen](#) in Somerset West (tender tongue, cheek, sirloin, brisket and rump).

Vegetarian dishes are also very exciting and imaginative at the moment. One of the most memorable was the vegetarian ravioli at [Terroir](#) in Stellenbosch, which features soft-and-silky pillows of courgette-filled pasta served with parmesan cream and porcini purée, and then smothered in a beautifully light and acidic tomato-butter sauce. A plate of heaven.



Ravioli - Terroir

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