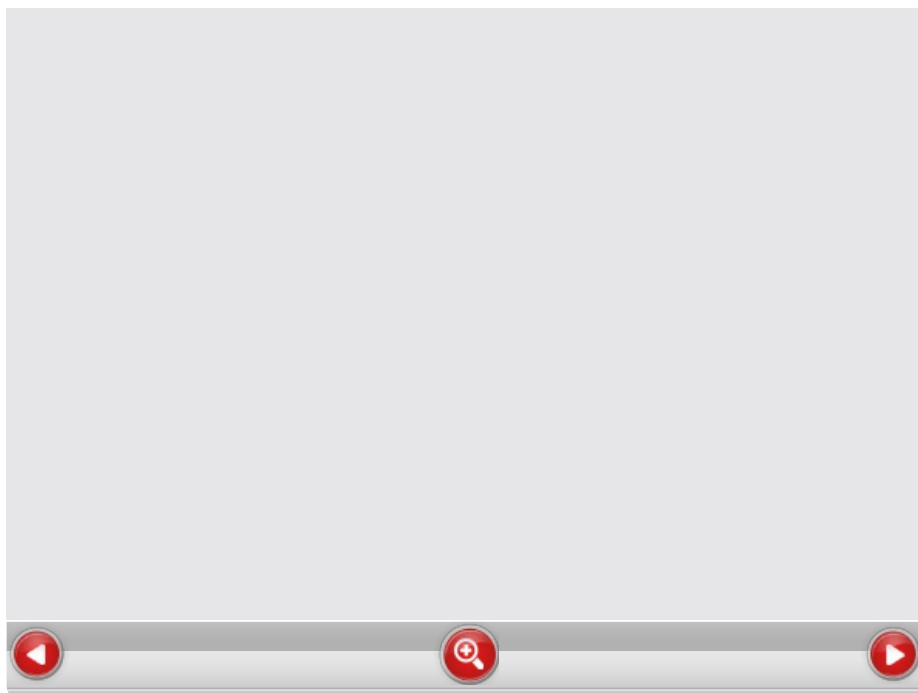


Sampling Grande Provence's sensational sensory summer lunch 2016

 By Leigh Andrews 30 Nov 2016

"Sensational: Adjective with two popular meanings. 1: Of or relating to sensation or the senses. 2: Arousing a quick, intense interest, curiosity, or emotional reaction." Executive chef Darren Badenhorst of Grande Provence's The Restaurant has woven these meanings and more into his sensational new summer menu.

Our [last visit](#) to The Restaurant at Grande Provence a few months ago was on a chilly winter's day that was all about indulging in the finest comfort food with the added cosiness of a crackling amber log fire in the quiet elegance of the main dining area. This time we were delighted to be seated outside on a gorgeously sunny Sunday under the shade of a bleached sycamore tree, with a balmy breeze and the satisfying crunch of gravel underfoot and jazzy sounds wafting outside rounding out the sensory experience. Warmly welcomed by manager Jacobus who remembered us from our previous visit, we sat listening to the wind whisper through the trees as every single outside table filled up – including a party with a well-behaved Jac Russell that leaped into a water feature to cool down. Badenhorst himself popped over for a brief chat about the weather and our meal preferences, explaining that as much as possible of the produce is farmed, pickled, fermented and foraged from the area. There's also lots of unexpected saltiness and pops of acid to pique your summery taste buds.

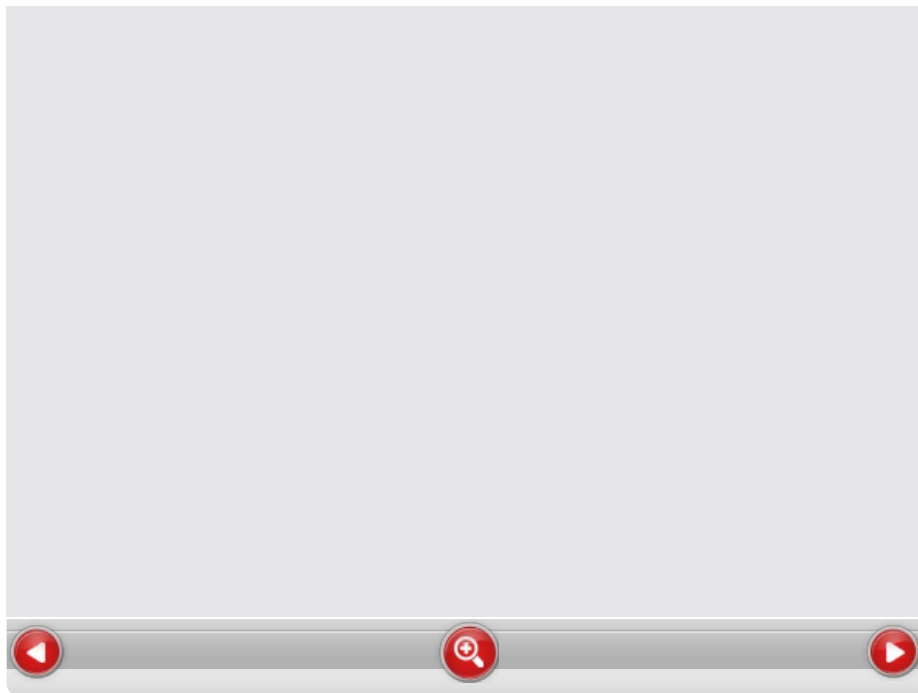


We began with the complimentary bread board I raved about after our winter visit. It was [just as I remembered](#): Cheese straws warm and flaky, mini seed loaf soft, and the slightly sweet poppy-seed dusted *mosbolletjies* just asking to be slathered with the herby basil pesto and soft, now porcini-flecked butter. We had just wolfed these all down when our first starters arrived and the bread board was whisked off to an isolated corner of the table, never to be touched again despite still holding generous smears of the moreish pesto and butter. Sob.

Carnivore's delight: Blesbok shank and short beef rib

That momentary sadness was soon forgotten as Badenhorst treated us to a variety of faultlessly presented courses that treated all the senses with seasonal delights. Our winter favourite, the 'chocolate forest' shroomy dessert is still on the menu, but everything else has been updated for a lighter summer palate that still shows Asian inspiration. For example, take the 'oh-so-beautiful to look' at local tuna *yukhoe*, served with a spiced guacamole and fermented bean to break the richness, topped with a tiny devilled quail's egg, as well as corn-dotted potato *korokke* and a strong, toasted sesame sphere. I can't think of a sense that wasn't engaged as we slowly rolled forkfuls across our tongues (mine was tuna-free and just as tomato-tasty).

Following a brief walk around the grounds and throughout the Sculpture Garden to stretch our legs and make a bit of tummy space, we sampled more starters: The simply outstanding 18-hour smoked pork belly served with spheres of fig caviar and a selection of the vineyard's micro herbs, as well as the 'asparagus garden' salad both creamy and salty thanks to the feta mousse, with sweet little Shimeji mushrooms and a brioche crumb. With lots of different salty tastes to break the richness, these dishes also featured soothing greens and whites against a pale blue background plate.



Next, the mains. We started off with the coriandered Blesbok shank – my best game meal of the year so far – swiftly followed by another of the summer main options: The slow-braised beef short rib with beautiful puffs of smoked pomme purée mash, as well as an Asian pickled mustard and selection of exotic mushrooms – oysters and shiitakes, to be exact, as well as a crisp potato tulle that proved ideal for scooping up the sweet date paste at the bottom of the bowl.

Classiest ice cream sandwich by far

By then full-to-bursting, I was happy to remember my 'dessert stomach' – yes, it's a separate thing. We sampled the delicious, creamy caramelised white chocolate pot au crème and the berry ice cream sandwich which was just sublime. No soggy wafer or melty vanilla puddle in sight, this is the stuff of girly carnival dreams with its deep raspberry tones and delightful rose-scented macaron, the ideal end-note for a relaxing afternoon of fantastic flavours and summery sensations.

Pushed to choose the best of each course, we'd recommend the pork belly starter, blesbok shank main and berry sandwich dessert.

But where's the negative, you ask? Surely it can't all be positive. Well, scrolling through a few [TripAdvisor reviews](#) to see whether I chime in with the verbal majority, I did note something that had bugging me on our visit: A fairly recent review commented on the weight and shape of the desert spoons which are "virtually impossible for a left-handed person." As a lefty myself, I battled the hefty challenge in silence and didn't even think to ask for an alternative as I was quite literally in berry heaven. Seeing a few mentions of how twinkly the outside Sculpture Garden area is at night also gave me a bit of envy – next time!

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of Grande Provence's The Restaurant, which is open daily. The three-course lunch option is R395 per person and the six-course dinner is R695. Note that [the menu](#) is subject to change on availability as the food is seasonal. Situated on Main Road Franschoek, Grande Provence is a convenient stop for the Franschoek wine tram. Contact The Restaurant at Grande Provence on restaurant@grandeprovence.co.za or call 021 876 8600 to make a booking.*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of inclusion, belonging, and of course, gourmet and drinks! Now follow her travel adventures on YouTube @MidlifeMeander. View my profile and articles...

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