

Fine dining, Vanilla style

Vanilla Restaurant at the new Cape Quarter extension, Green Point, is now open and promises fine dining, Manhattan glamour and more than just a taste of vanilla.



A passion for orchids, coupled with an Inca love story, is the inspiration behind Vanilla - a new Cape Town fine-dining restaurant. Vanilla is the essential essence that permeates décor and design details, as well as the food and cocktail menus at this sophisticated eatery in the new Cape Quarter.

Also owners of Tuscany Beach Restaurant, Camps Bay's, the Newhouse family have been restaurateurs for 20 years. Vanilla is the newest and most ambitious venture for the family - Nigel, Maxine and son Simon. They wanted Vanilla to be smart, slick, state of the art and contemporary. The ultimate in fine dining, but without exorbitant prices.

Unique décor and furnishings

A dramatic contemporary and classic colour palette was chosen for the unique décor and furnishings. Silver, charcoal, cerise pink and, of course, creamy vanilla have been used to create atmosphere and warmth. Table tops echo chic European trends and are adorned with graphics of orchids in high gloss. Silvered Louis chairs provide comfortable seating on the two dining levels, which are linked by a sparkling solid glass staircase.

Suspended between the first and second levels of the dining area is a glass platform, replete with a baby grand piano in vanilla. This floating stage is where musicians play live contemporary jazz and classical rhythms for background music. By night, the glass floor is illuminated with special effect LED mood lighting creating a completely surreal ambiance. An oversized cut-glass chandelier hangs above the floating glass floor, and adds a touch of elegant theatre to the area.

By day, two sides of the restaurant open up completely onto a four-storey atrium. Dining is extended through to the outside piazza, which offers al fresco, continental-style dining for 65 patrons. There's also a sushi bar here and comfortable lounge seating as well as a martini and cocktail bar and designated smoking area.

Inside seats 100 diners, and there's also the option of two intimate candlelit tables on the suspended glass floor offering the chef's menu for special occasions. A 16-seater private dining room with its own entrance is available for corporate functions and private dinners. The kitchen is a completely open mezzanine level elevated above the ground floor. So chefs are part of the restaurant atmosphere and customers can also see right inside the kitchen.

Hand-picked staff

Vanilla's staff has been hand picked, and are all supremely experienced. Renowned chef, Matthew Gordo owner of Haute Cabriere and The French Connection in Franschoek - was commissioned as consultant chef. Gordon assisted with both the design of the menu and the kitchen along with appointed executive chef Evan Coosner and second-in-line Greg Baverstock.

Both are culinary experts, Coosner having worked with Reuben Riffel of Reuben's and Mike Bassett of Gir. Baverstock trained at the two-star Michelin restaurant le Gauroche in the UK and was head chef at Browns, Rivonia and executive chef at the Harbour Café in Kalk Bay.

Together they have developed Vanilla's signature dishes and cocktails, many infused with the essence of vanilla - a fundamental ingredient in all aspects of the restaurant.

Andrew Freeman is front of house, having just returned from seven years on cruise ships - including the QEII.

The cuisine

Dining at Vanilla offers tastes from around the world at competitive prices. The menu is extensive. Opening at 10am, the brunch menu offers light terrace meals and during the week it's geared for business people; similarly lunches are light and quick, with salads, seafood and sushi also on offer on the piazza. But Sunda lunch on the piazza is a relaxed affair, accompanied by soft live music.

The martini cocktail bar also flows out onto the piazza for late-afternoon drinks and an extensive selection of cocktails - again, many include vanilla. Then fine dining starts at 6pm, accompanied by an impressive selection of wines that include vintage offerings - all tasted and chosen by Nigel himself. Prices range from reasonable to extravagant, but the resident sommelier will assist patrons with the perfect choice.

To reserve a table call +27 (0) 21 421 1391 or go to www.vanillarestaurant.com.