

La Petite Ferme's new chef impresses

 By [Brian Berkman](#)

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With the recent appointment of executive chef Sidwell Yarrow, [La Petite Ferme](#) is raising its head above the culinary parapets of Franschhoek, long feted as SA's gourmet capital.

From 1 September 2017, the new menu will position this perennial favourite as a go-to culinary destination.

Chef Yarrow has been working the high seas on some of the globe's best cruise-liners and has quite a culinary pedigree. What impressed me were the dishes he served us from the 1 September menu. They had the elegance and refinement of a fine-dining establishment but portions were more generous and less fussy. This is, in my opinion, a welcome turn.



Executive Chef Sidwell Yarrow

Also, in his recognition of the plethora dietary restrictions which many now have, he has a regular menu item suitable for diabetics, low-carb followers and the gluten intolerant. As someone who follows the low-carb, sugar-free approach myself, I can tell you it is very rare to find dessert items that are not only suitable, but also delicious. I will return to dine at La Petite Ferme just to enjoy Yarrow's deconstructed cheese plate, which includes beetroot, slow cooked in sous-vide, Karoo blue cheese, crunch in the form of flaxseed and a dusting of ruby coloured crumb made from dehydrated and powdered beetroot, along with beetroot gel.

Cuisine for banters and sugar lovers alike

Sugar lovers won't be disappointed either with a paean to chocolate in the valrhona chocolate torte with a mocha flavoured panna cotta, fennel ice cream and orange. While there's nothing new about the combination of chocolate, coffee and orange the addition of fennel in a dessert is pretty new and JP's eyes rolled back into their sockets as if in a drug-induced pleasure stupor at tasting it. Main courses of pastrami duck and game meat were both top notch.

Breakfast also featured a few items of special note, which comprised of whole wheat croissants; homemade yoghurt with fruit coulis, and bottled smoothies of the day.



Guilt-free bathing

We stayed in the roomy Geneva Cottage which, with two full bathrooms, will be a comfortable home for even the most fastidious. Geneva is situated on the far right of the estate and as such, it felt wonderfully private especially from the one bathroom with its picture window with views over the valley.

Although having a tub may seem like an extravagance in periods of water shortage, the Geneva Cottage has a borehole installed, so you can fill your bath without feeling guilty. I loved the vast walk-in shower and even though there are two bathrooms, the en-suite one had double basins.

There is also a dressing room area with sufficient storage to stay for a few weeks. In fact, other than missing self-catering facilities, the cottage is the perfect long-stay destination. There's a deep porch or "stoep" as we like to call them in South Africa, with a table and dining chairs, as well as two timber recliners. We didn't try the plunge pool.



There's under carpet heating throughout the suite and also an easy to use gas fireplace in the comfy sitting room. The only drawback, if drawback it be, is that their location on the slope of a mountain means they can't pick up satellite TV channels. We didn't even switch on the TV during our stay or take advantage of the DVD library available – good to know they're in the process of fitting the rooms with smart televisions.

A highlight of the bedrooms are the romantic four-poster carved timber beds. La Petite Ferme is famous for its perch above the village of Franschoek and concomitant views, particularly spectacular for early in the morning or to watch the sun dip behind the mountains.

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