

Chef Luke Dale Roberts' launches The Test Kitchen pop-up restaurant in Mauritius

By [Jenny Handley](#)

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Iconic chef Luke Dale Roberts of The Test Kitchen was awarded three plates for world-class destination dining worthy of a flight in the 2018 JHP Gourmet Guide. The plating rating is SA's restaurant rating system that equates to global standards. Curator of the guide, Jenny Handley, followed Luke and his team to attend the opening night of The Test Kitchen Mauritius pop-up restaurant, last night, 12 April 2018, at the 70-seater Republik Beach Club & Grill at Shangri-La Le Touessrok Resort & Spa in Mauritius.



The ocean formed an unforgettable backdrop for a dining experience that was first-class. Dignitaries and media gathered on the lawns under the palm trees to enjoy his legendary Dark Room experience with island-style cocktails and Champagne. Yellow lentil crisps with local atchar and homemade sour cream and Mauritian spiced 'Kobe' biltong had guests 'oohing' and 'aahing'. Local wild boar rolls with sushi rice and bloomed mustard, and ceviche with curried pineapple and lemongrass granite followed.



Luke then welcomed guests to the Republik Bar area before they moved to the Light Room for a seated six-course gourmand menu accompanied by Swartland wines. Local flavours were turned up a notch or two, with local honey, vanilla curry leaves and aromatic hibiscus flowers alongside pigeon and seafood that took centre stage.

Seamless and swift service

Herb-fired tuna with an olive dressing, fermented tofu dip and grilled asparagus set the tone for an unforgettable experience, with the hibiscus-cured foie gras 'mi-cuit' with vanilla syrup, pistachio paste and salted meringue. Watching the team at work energetically plating and serving, the heat in the kitchen matched the island's temperature and humidity. Seamless and swift service for all guests, including those with special dietary needs, and the volume of happy voices rose. There was quiet as the Vielle rouge (red snapper) with butter roasted carrot, coriander pesto and carrot extraction was tasted. Sublime. The delicately crisp and tender slow-cooked pork belly with blue cheese, local honey and lavender was equally superb. Woodpigeon with local cacao, beetroot, liver stuffing and dukkah stole the show. Dessert of 'bread, milk and honey' rounded off a perfect meal.



Luke's innovation extends beyond the plate. When Luke realised the impact of the drought in the Cape, and that Day Zero may become a reality, he decided to implement a drought and waterless menu at The Test Kitchen in Woodstock, Cape Town, and to take part of the team to Mauritius for this pop-up.

Island offerings

I asked Luke about the excitement and challenges of cooking on the island in an unfamiliar kitchen. "The Shangri-La is top class, and its superior kitchens offer us all we need. We have only brought small equipment with us, like foam guns. Initially, we planned to bring bigger equipment, but the costs and practicality of shipping it over were daunting. I'm excited about cooking with local produce. We will tweak our existing menu to showcase all that the island offers, like fresh seafood and palm hearts. There will be a tapas menu and two different five-course menus designed to showcase Mauritian spices and flavours. This is an exciting project for members of our team, who will bring back the benefits of the experience and share it with the rest of the team back in Cape Town."



Sabrina Sobrayen, assistant director of communications of the Shangri-La Le Touessrok commented on the value of the skills interchange, “We are honoured to host Luke and his team here, and Luke will, in the second half of their time on the island, be training our staff, which is an incredible opportunity for everyone.”

The Test Kitchen is famed globally for innovation and discovery. There is no doubt that this culinary journey will be an exciting one, for Luke, his team and every diner at The Test Kitchen in Mauritius from 12 April-26 May 2018.



The Test Kitchen Mauritius experience is priced at MUR 3,500 per person, including a snack menu of four dishes served tapas style in the Dark Room and a five-course gourmand menu in the Light Room. To book your stay during Luke Dale Roberts's Test Kitchen pop up, contact World Leisure Holidays who are the exclusive distributor of Shangri-La's Le Touessrok travel packages in South Africa. Call 011 285 2500 or visit www.wlh.co.za.

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