

# AIR TALES

*The magazine for southern Africa* *August/October 1996 • Vol.3 No.4*

**Kirstenbosch**

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# RESTAURANT REVIEWS

## IN BRIEF

A little-known fact to all but those who live in Pretoria is that the Capital in fact has a surprising number of superb restaurants. A hallmark of French/Belgian cooking for a long time has been **La Madeleine**. After a recent Embassy function in Pretoria on a Friday night a food critic suggested that we try it. Of course there were no tables available, but the chef tactfully suggested that we try the **Brasserie De Paris** [Tel: (012) 342-5057, 525 Duncan Street, Hatfield], what a surprise. A large saloon-type interior with live classical music greets you. Tables are decked out in starched white cloths and heavy silver. The menu was typically French and included a good onion soup. For main courses they specialize in steaks, cooked to perfection with a selection of tantalizing sauces including a good bearnaise. The bill for four people came to R378 including desserts, coffees, 1 bottle of wine, Calvados and an R80 bottle of Noble Late Harvest!!! (MCB)

**Bayfront Blu Restaurant and Coffee Shop** [Tel: (021) 419-9068] located in the Two oceans Aquarium has a superb location, overlooking the comings and goings of the busy working harbour. The stylish décor has a nautical feel with marine blue banquettes, ropes and lots of gleaming brass and copper. The stunning ethnic ceramic tableware is made by Clementina van der Walt in Paarl. Customers like it so much that they often buy some to take home with them.

Although the restaurant is large all the different seating areas have an intimate feel. Pat Pryce-Fitchem opened Bayfront Blu in June 1996. She has been in the restaurant business for 23 years and already owns the popular Mangos and La Scala in the Cavendish Shopping Centre. Top quality ingredients are her benchmark. In Bayfront Blu she serves only the best coffee and the wine list is limited to estate wines.

A complimentary basket of fresh bread - made on the premises - accompanies all meals except breakfast. The menu is large and contains many appropriately fishy items with 11 different ways of serving calamari, a choice of line fish and a Crab Newberg to die for. It also includes some interesting African specialities - Isityusentlanzi fish stew, a Swahili prawn curry and Tambiso's Soweto stew - a spicy lamb and spinach stew with sweet potato and assorted spices. Breakfast is a moveable feast and served at any time of day. Pat makes special arrangements for the children's birthday parties during which a Montessori teacher will provide 45 minutes of organized party games while the parents sneak a gin and tonic downstairs. Open 7 days a week. (CA)

## FAT FRANKS SOUTHERN DINER

Tel: (011) 804-7055. Pavilion Centre, Cnr Rivonia & Kelvin Rds, Morningside, Jnb.

When you walk into the restaurant you are immediately greeted by friendly faces which has become a hallmark of the Linger Longer Group, to which Fat Franks belongs. Off to one side is the fish market, leading to the bar, while on the other side is the Cajun buffet.

After being seated at our table, and ordering wine - Overgaauw Chardonnay at R54,50 per bottle - from a wine list that includes some interesting lesser-known wines, our waiter, Owen, led us to the buffet. It is divided into three sections - starters at R12,50 include a bowl of salad, soup or gumbo; main course at R35,50 which includes a variety of Cajun specialities and desserts at R12,50 - fruit salads and flapjacks.

Waiters explain the various dishes on the buffet and guests are encouraged to taste the food as they go along (tasting bowls provided).

On the fish side there is an assortment of prawns and linefish cooked in the traditional Cajun way. To our mind the best value is the seafood platter for two at R150 - langoustines, king prawns, calamari, mussels, blackened linefish, baby crayfish, crab claws and chips. Over and above there is also an à la carte menu.

We settled for the Cajun buffet. The salads consist of a number of ingredients including nuts, jars of different strengthened chillies, anchovy-flavoured croûtons as large as biscuits and a wide selection of greens.

On the night, the main course included fish and shellfish, chicken, beef, sweet potatoes, stirfried vegetables and rice. On the whole we were introduced to a wide selection of new and interesting flavours.

The big disappointment of the evening was the desserts. Service in this section was slow and the flapjacks were burned on the outside and undercooked in the centre.

Bill for two including wine - R186,80

Out of 10 we rate the restaurant as follows: Welcome & service 8, wine list 7, value for money 8, quality of food 6, atmosphere 7.(CB)

## BUKHARA

Tel: (021) 24-0000. 33 Church St, CT.

Bukhara opened in November 1995 and specializes in north Indian food. It is spacious with saffron-coloured décor, solid wood furniture and the gleam of copper pots - a little bleak on a storm-lashed winter's evening, but the heat of the tandoor ovens, in the open-plan kitchen, soon warms things up.

Bukhara is the brainchild of Sabi Sabharwal whose family owns three similar restaurants in Delhi and one in Amsterdam. He gave up a career in theoretical physics to come to Cape Town with his South African-born wife Elana.

The menu is small - pork and beef do not feature but there is a good vegetarian selection. Buttered chicken is the speciality of the house, and we also ordered fish tikka and roghan josh, a Kashmiri lamb curry, with basmati rice, raita and naan bread. The wine list seemed somewhat overpriced so we settled for a glass of creamy, salt fassi (yoghurt whipped with crushed ice and salt).

We nibbled complimentary poppadums with raw onion and spicy pudina chutney and watched the Indian chef toss a lump of dough and place it in the tandoor with a long, pronged fork.

Our food was superb. The chicken melted in the mouth, cooked in ghee (clarified butter) with tomato and a creamy, fragrant sauce - a classic dish from the Moghul cuisine. The lamb fell off the bone but was not overcooked. The fish tikka, marinated in chick-pea flour and ajwan, provided an interesting contrast in flavours. The naan bread was outstanding - eight breads feature on the menu. Two minor quibbles. A small hot plate would have been welcome and the raita was bland as no mint was used.

As the dessert menu is limited to vanilla ice-cream we opted for Don Pedros followed by Darjeeling tea and rock sugar with fennel seeds. The total bill for two was R162,39 without gratuity. Out of 10 we rate the restaurant as follows: Welcome 7, service 8, wine list 5, value for money 6, quality of food 8, atmosphere 7. (CA) →