

Terroir-bly delicious: Plating up for Winter 2016

By Leigh Andrews

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Now in its 12th year of operation, Terroir continues to dazzle among Stellenbosch's cluster of culinary stars, with chef Michael Broughton - at the helm since that first oven switch back in 2004 - constantly aiming to outdo the restaurant's personal best, particularly with the new 2016 Winter Plate options...



The infamous daily chalkboard.

That's no mean feat as this personal best is stratospheric, having been honoured with a Top 10 award in the annual *Eat Out* Mercedes-Benz Restaurant Awards nine times now – currently ranked as 8th best in the country – and again featured in *Eat Out* editor Abigail Donnelly's list of [top food trends](#) for 2016, with their vegetarian ravioli described as "A plate of heaven", and one of the most memorable in a time of exciting and imaginative non-meat plates.

But come Winter, it's meat that you want. The chill in the air makes your frosty insides long for something warm and comforting that's still zinging with flavour. That's just what we got at Terroir while sampling their Winter Plate special this weekend...

Situated in Stellenbosch's lush Kleine Zalze estate and directly overlooking the De Zalze golf club, we were faced with a true 'where to sit' dither. A stone outdoor table promised fine dining amid faint birdsong and a gentle breeze rustling trees, while the also-booked inside seating option promised a direct view of the kitchen and the inviting orangey warmth of a real hearth log fire. Outside won out when we were offered fluffy blankets to ward off the mild chill. And so, each armed with a complimentary glass of MCC, our Terroir Winter Plate reviewing began.

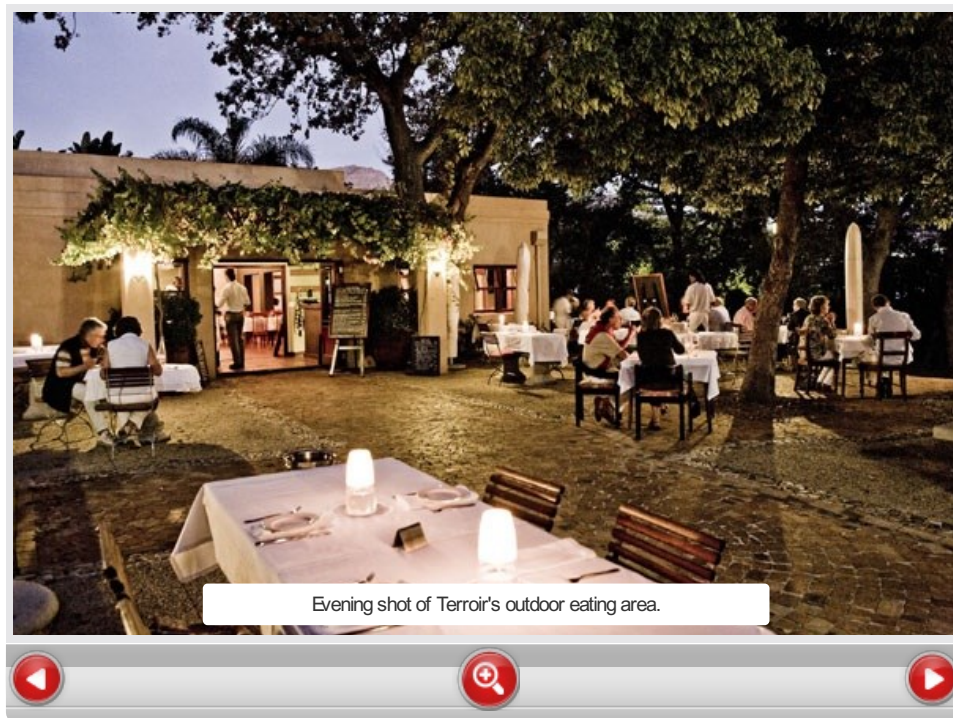
Blackboard menu bliss

While the Winter Plate special comprises a choice of two pleasing plates of Terroir's finest, along with complementary glass of wine, we were convinced to also try out the starters and dessert in order to assess the full Terroir experience.

While slowly sipping our bubbly, waiter Quinton set up that day's blackboard beside the table, explained the dishes in full and left us to make up our minds. Before we could blink he was back with the Kleine Zalze Barrel Fermented Vineyard Selection Chenin Blanc to pair with our starters, as well as that day's bread board, featuring the pull-apart freshest ciabatta and a light tomato focaccia bread, as well as a bowl of slippery home-smoked and -marinated olives, a twist of rock salt and a wheel of the palest plain butter to bring out those flavours. We'd hardly taken a bite before also being presented with the day's complementary amuse bouche. The kitchen had noted my unfortunate allergy to all things from the sea so provided a single fish croquette for my husband to sample and extra paper-thin pork spring rolls for me. All piping hot with delightful dipping sauces, our bellies were soon sufficiently lined and tastebuds fine-tuned for the meal ahead.

Those sensational sauces

For starters, my husband opted for the prawn risotto with sauce Americaine, which has been on the ever-changing menu for 11 years with good reason. I went with our waiter's suggestion of the new Winter item of 'smoked tomato tart', which was a truly eye-pleasing blend of natural tomato reds, creamy goat's cheese whites and pea puree greens broken up by the tiniest bright yellow button – a tiny, poached hen's egg yolk, cooked for an hour-and-a-half only to pour like the finest hollandaise across the butteriest pastry bed.



Next up, mains. We went with the day's two Winter plate options, denoted with a subtle star on the packed chalkboard. My husband tucked into the 'linefish of the day' with relish – flaky dorado on a bed of handmade potato gnocchi and baby vegetables with Ciboulette sauce, while I went for the pumpkin seed crumb-crust, meltingly soft beef fillet atop smear of smoked potato, charred onion, peas, spinach, pumpkin, black mushroom puree and utterly more-ish truffle jus. These were paired with the Kleine Zalze 2013 Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon respectively, making the meal that much more remarkable as they brought out the truly sensational flavour of those sensational sauces.

Though both full to bursting by now, we simply couldn't resist the temptations chalked onto the dessert menu and ended up sharing a plate of chocolatey heaven in the form of dark chocolate moussey bar, peanut-butter ice cream and dusting of salty crumbs, coffee nibs, caramel tulle and white chocolate quenelles. My skills of description simply aren't up for the task; it's something you'll have to taste for yourself.

The best bit? Terroir truly lives up to its name, as everything that comes out of the kitchen is made right on the premises. With a menu that's reinvented every season, you'll find yourself smiling with satisfaction at Terroir again and again. It's a true Winter delight.

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of Terroir. The Winter Plate special includes two options for the main course, paired with a glass of red or white Kleine Zalze Vineyard Selection wine for R195 as well as the complimentary bread board and daily amuse bouche, for lunch each day and dinner daily from Monday to Saturday. The special runs until 30 September 2016, but note that the restaurant will be closed from 27 June to 21 July for its annual winter break. Call +27 021 880 8167 or email restaurant@kleinezalze.co.za to make your 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 diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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