

The best of Durbanville Hills Winery

 By [Cari Coetzee](#)

4 Jul 2018

With Table Mountain at its back, rolling hills at its front, and an exceptional view of Robben Island in between, the Durbanville Hills Winery has become a firm favourite for wine and food lovers living in or visiting the Cape region.



In keeping with its contemporary and elegant brand, the wine tasting lounge and restaurant delivers a fitting experience for visitors, charming them with its selection of award-winning wines and deliciously picturesque dishes.

My friend and I arrived at the wine tasting lounge and were seated at arguably the best seats in the house - comfy chairs, a fireplace, and views for days to enhance the wine pairing experience we were about to have.

Perfect pairings

Now, my friend and I are wine lovers and therefore a bit spoiled when it comes to wine tastings, having done a fair few of them. One thing we both agreed on is that when it comes to a five-wine pairing, there are at least one or two pairings that miss the mark. So, we were pleasantly surprised when the following pairing delivered a perfect five-out-of-five selection: the wine, biltong, and dried fruit pairing.



Pair one - Dried mango accompanied Durbanville Hills' sparkling Sauvignon Blanc, enhancing its fun and fruity flavours without sacrificing the crisp freshness of the wine itself.

Pair two - Dried guava roll complemented the peach and apricot notes of the Durbanville Hills Chenin Blanc, achieving a balanced and absolutely delightful taste.

Pair three - The sweetness of the Durbanville Hills Merlot Rosé was tempered by the saltiness of the lean Karoo beef sticks. The pairing saw the best of both the wine and the meat celebrated, making for a simply delicious tasting experience.

Pair four - The mild beef biltong - spiced and dried to perfection - went incredibly well with the heavier blackcurrant notes of the Durbanville Hills Cabernet Sauvignon. The mouthfeel remained smooth, with neither of the two too overpowering.

Pair five - Our absolute favourite - so much so that we acquired a bottle after the tasting - was the Durbanville Hills Pinotage paired with the kudu droëwors. The acidity and darker fruity flavours complemented the mildly gamey sausage extremely well - a very thoughtfully pairing.

It is clear that the pairing was put together with careful consideration and a significant attention to detail, seeing the flavours of the wines elegantly carried through by their respective food dishes.

Best of the best

After the tasting, we headed upstairs to the restaurant - a beautiful, airy venue that allows the views to take centre stage. It was easy to see why it was voted the best restaurant of 2017's Restaurant Week among many other accolades.



We got a special visit from the restaurant's GM, Dirk Steyn, who told us a bit more about the restaurant and the menu. "We're not a burger or steak and chips restaurant..." said Steyn who was tasked five years ago, together with the chef, to create a menu around and with the Durbanville Hills wines in mind.

Steyn said that most of the people who started out five years ago were still with them and that's what makes the restaurant experience so exceptional and successful. "Obviously the wine is great, the food is excellent and the views are fantastic, but it's the people that make it a success." The service was indeed superb with our waiter always friendly and on hand, anticipating our every need.

Steyn says that, unlike the rest of the Winelands that receive a lot of tourists, Durbanville Hills' clientele consists mostly of locals who don't want small pieces but rather sizable portions - "they want a good plate of food and value for money."



Chef Louisa Greeff

"We're not fine dining, but we're also not a franchise. I always say that we're a traditional South African restaurant, but our chef has a bit of a French and Italian influence," said Steyn. This influence was clear as Chef Louisa Greeff delivered dish upon the perfect dish.

The restaurant changes its menu every five months but the current menu is a unique one. 30 May 2018 marked the five year anniversary of when Steyn and his team took over the restaurant. They looked back over all their past menus, identifying the best performing and most popular dishes, ultimately creating a super menu and that is what diners will get to experience over the next few months till November - and since I put it to the test, I can honestly say that it's not to be missed.

Delectable dining

With only the best of the best on the menu, it was quite a task to choose which dishes to indulge in - but a task my friend and I were more than up for.

For starters, I chose the duck spring rolls with spiced orange, sweet chilli and soy sauce - a dish I simply cannot fault. The pastry was crispy, the duck

cooked to perfection and packed full of flavour, and the sweet and umami from the orange and soy just boosted the entire dish. My friend enjoyed the quail with bacon, sage, caramelised onion and a dried fruit chutney. The flawlessly prepared quail was an absolute winner and paired with the bacon and chutney, it achieved a great balance of flavour.



Now, I'm going through a bit of a pork belly phase at the moment, so when I saw it on the menu I didn't hesitate. Reading the accompanying elements, I knew it would be a kicker: apple and raisin preserve, mustard potato puree, braised red cabbage and cider jus - a flavour match made in heaven. The dish delivered on each element with the pork belly cooked perfectly, the mash and jus delicious and full of flavour, and the cabbage adding a freshness and some extra texture. My friend opted for the beef sirloin (always a favourite) with pappardelle, tomato spread, mushrooms, rocket and jus. Both the beef and the pappardelle were cooked just right, the jus added a delicious flavour and, together with the rocket, brought a lovely vibrancy to the dish.



The desserts weren't just sweet treats, but works of art and delivered in abundance. I chose the pecan pie cheesecake soufflé: honey roasted pecans, praline sauce, cotton cheesecake, and caramel popcorn. This golden delight was almost too pretty to eat, but eat I did. While incredibly sweet, the cheesecake was that magical consistency every cheesecake lover always looks for and the caramel popcorn (always a crowd pleaser) packed a playful punch. My friend chose the carrot cake with walnut crumble, candied carrot, spiced apricot ice cream, cream cheese icing, brandy snap and a caramel glaze - another stunning dessert. The cake was beautifully cooked and when are cream cheese icing and ice cream ever a miss? While there are quite a few elements, they don't vie for attention but, instead, form a perfectly well-balanced treat to end off a entirely delectable dining experience.





The restaurant delivered on every dish, the Durbanville Hills brand on every promise it made. I highly recommended stopping by to partake in the best-of-the-best menu and the wine pairing - make a day of it!

The special anniversary menu runs till November. For more info or to make a reservation go to www.durbanvillehills.co.za

ABOUT CARI COETZEE

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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