

# Good, better, best



By **Brian Berkman**

**C**uvée restaurant at Simonsig Estate in Stellenbosch succeeds in providing an elegant restaurant where the focus is on local ingredients. Scoring high marks in the fabulosity stakes, the stand-out décor is framed by moody gun-mettle grey walls, large mismatched mirrors, empty picture frames on walls and a selection of the Malan matriarch's crockery perched high above.

There's a lot to look at above such as a riempie stool dangling from the ceiling. At ground level there are white vinyl poufs, dark timber floors and large, comfortable chairs and tables.

I always feel comfortable eating here. Décor is by Neil Stemmet, who is a partner in the business and innovative chef Jacques Erasmus, previously of Manna Restaurant, directs the food, which chef Shanel Gildenhuys interprets and prepares.

I love that menu items list the ingredient's provenance. I like to know what I'm eating and where it has come from. This is a global trend which I'm pleased to say is increasingly finding traction in South Africa. When we dined there, shoulder of saltbush mutton was available. I can't recall when last I saw mutton on a local menu, which is a great

pity as the meat is much tastier than lamb and provided it is cooked correctly, as tender and delicious to eat. Here the shoulder meat is pulled into strips and served with a puff-pastry pie crust. Ground coriander and green-fig preserve flavours evoke memories of Karoo cooking.

The fillet steak also gets local treatment with heady mushroom flavours in the form of Jonkershoek boletus forest shrooms. The menu changes with the seasons, so be prepared to eat whatever they offer you.

For summer, the Cuvée Sauvignon Blanc Menu alternates on a weekly basis and is available for lunch and dinner from November 2010 until end of January 2011. It ranges from R160 to R190 per head and includes a complimentary glass of Simonsig Sunbird Sauvignon Blanc 2010 - a delicious white wine radiating fresh intensity and exceptional fruit layers. More exciting though is the launch of their old-school style Aurum Chardonnay on Friday, October 29 with a four-course paired menu. (R375 per head)

This full-bodied, French oak ma-



**Cuvée fillet of beef with boletus mushrooms & red wine butter**

tured Chardonnay is named after the Latin word for gold for its colour and rarity. Winemaker Hannes Meyer will pair goat's cheese crostini and muscat grape jam with Simonsig's Chardonnay driven, flagship Cap Clasique, Cuvée Royal 2005. Poached crayfish with grapefruit butter and fine lamb crackling is paired with Simonsig Chardonnay 2009 while the new Simonsig Aurum Chardonnay 2007 is matched with peppered loin of Hantam lamb with tamarind cream, fresh white asparagus and sweet wine pearl onions. Fresh Helderberg berries in almond and saffron sabayon is married with their Noble Late Harvest, Vin de Liza 2008.

**Cuvée Restaurant at Simonsig.**  
**021- 888 4932.**  
**[www.simonsig.co.za](http://www.simonsig.co.za)**

Moving from Stellenbosch to the Helderberg Mountains near Sir Lowry's Pass Village you will find Journey's End.

The Gabb Family produce the Journey's End Chardonnay 09 which retails for around R120 a bottle. This is a premium price but I think it a most delicious Chardonnay with citrus on the nose and lovely ripe fruit and almond in the mouth.

Nine months in new French oak barrels gives the wine a richness and bigness that I enjoy. We served it with a Chicken Pie and a green salad with pomegranate seeds and strawberry splash. Too often a vinaigrette dressing (especially balsamic) clashes with wine but these were very good to eat and drink together.

**[www.journeysend.co.za](http://www.journeysend.co.za)**

When Brian Berkman isn't demanding to know where his food comes from, he writes about luxury travel. Register at [www.BrianBerkman.com](http://www.BrianBerkman.com) to receive Brian Berkman's Luxury World Update in your inbox.

