

what's cooking at the moment?

 By [Janine Fourie](#)

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Chefs and foodies are constantly innovating and reinventing dishes and menus. From the massive helpings of meat-and-three-veg – or comfort food of yesteryear – to the extreme minimalism of nouvelle cuisine... just when you think it's all been done, someone comes up with something new.

South Africa's food scene is no different with restaurant and food trends constantly changing. Here is a glimpse of what's cooking at the moment.



Chef Janine

Reinventing traditional cooking

There seems to be a return to rediscovering, modernising and/or reinventing traditional cooking methods. At Big Easy Wine Bar & Grill Durban by Ernie Els we adapt and tweak traditional dishes in a variety of ways.

Offal's distinctive taste is not popular with everyone and chefs need to be creative so as to tempt diners into broadening their horizons. This can be done by disguising the ingredient as a meatball or burger, wrapping it in bacon or adding our local spices to mask the taste. For example, I incorporate offal into our Big Easy menu in a lamb liver dish, spice-up a mini-bunny with peri-peri chicken livers and pair flambéed lamb kidneys with portobello mushrooms.

A little-known fact for diners is that offal – kidneys, liver, heart, tripe, etc. – has numerous health benefits. Kidneys are loaded with vitamin B12, iron, riboflavin, vitamin B6 and much more. Liver is considered the king of organ meats as it is the most concentrated source of vitamin A and is also packed with iron. Heart is also a plentiful source of several of the B vitamins, as well as thiamine, folate, and zinc. Beef heart contains amino acids (which are thought to improve metabolism – good to know for weight loss) and compounds that promote the production of collagen and elastin (which assist in skin maintenance).

International dishes with a local twist

Another trend at the moment is taking well-known dishes from other countries and giving them a local twist. Italy is one of my favourite “food” spots and Italian dishes and specialist ingredients are a great source of inspiration to me.

Fritters can be found around the world – from Asia to Britain to the USA... as well as in South Africa. I have taken the humble fritter and put a spin on it – combining Italian and traditional local ingredients in a putu-pap, kudu biltong and gourmet Greek Ash Brie cheese fritter! I serve this with a conventional Italian salad which I have tweaked using pears poached in our Big Easy Red Wine and adding them to a fresh rocket and leek salad with pickled celery.

Pickled ingredients are popular additions to restaurant dishes around the world adding colour and flavour. Because of a

longer shelf life, these are a must in any would-be cook's pantry. You can also make your own - most fruit and veggies can be pickled.

So be inspired and get creative in your own kitchen. The world is definitely any chef's oyster – be it at home or at a top restaurant.

ABOUT JANINE FOURIE

Chef Janine Fourie is the head chef at Big Easy Winebar & Grill in Durban.

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