

towns | people | entrepreneurs | gardening | food | DIY | animals

Platteland

SUMMER 2022/23

The slow life is the good life

PHOTO ESSAY

Middelburg
hosts the very
first wool festival

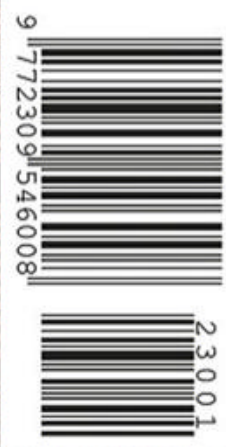
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rolled cigars

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home industry**

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River Valley in
a bottle

DIY

Build a raised
planter box
with a protective
cover



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De Rust

Heaven on earth
in the Little Karoo

FORGING AHEAD

The ancient craft
of smithery

Let's
relax!

2 SPECIAL
MENUS

Ina Paarman
shares fuss-free fare
from her latest book

Isabella Niehaus
prepares a West Coast feast

Bushmanland after rain...

Postcards to a departed friend



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SUMMER 2022/23

Contents

Upfront

- 6 Chitchat** Our readers share stories, reminiscences, and experiences that evoke a sense of wonder at the natural world
- 10 News & diary** Christmas markets galore, a cat café, a firefly sanctuary and more
- 19 Let's go to town** Pretty things for your home and garden

Towns & people

- 22 My town** "The gateway to heaven" is how a resident of De Rust describes this town at the foot of the Swartberg
- 42 Bushmanland after rain** Willem van der Berg remembers Oom Jan Poortjie, who didn't live to see the miracle of good rains after years of drought on his farm
- 50 Entrepreneur** Elana Bruwer, the powerhouse behind Elana's, turns "ugly food" into something beautiful
- 60 Smithery** Alan Duggan chatted to six blacksmiths and bladesmiths, and came away with new respect for this ancient craft
- 72 Photo essay** When Middelburg hosted the Karoo Winter Wool Festival in June, Samantha Reinders was there to capture the fun



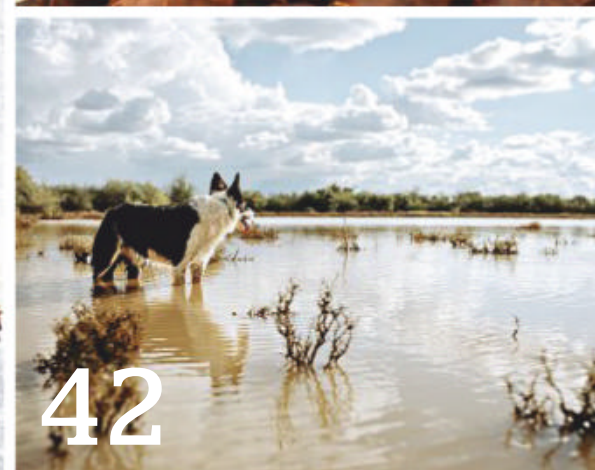
72



128



94



42

- 84 I made the move** Her love of horses was the reason Juliette Whelpton moved from Pretoria to Philippolis... via Kaapsehoop
- 94 Entrepreneurs** The Snymans of Santa Bras introduce us to the art of rolling cigars by hand, using homegrown tobacco leaves

In the kitchen

- 120 Isabella Niehaus** Set a long table and spoil family and friends with the flavourful menu that Isabella put together specially for *Platteland*
- 128 Ina Paarman** Start a new tradition this year with Ina's summery festive menu, which can be prepared in advance to make for no-fuss entertaining

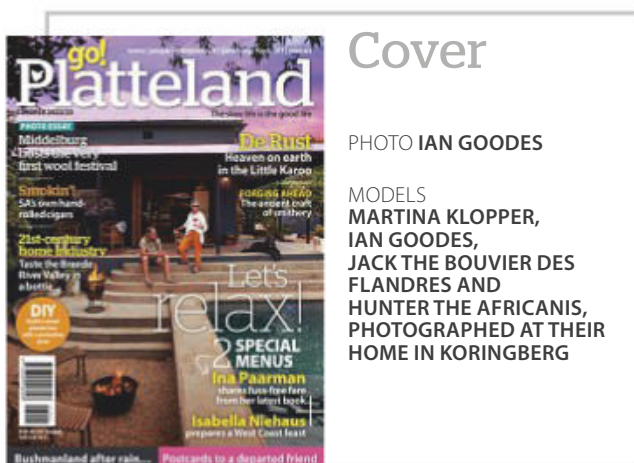
In the garden

- 104 Gardening diary** We shine a spotlight on our country's botanical riches and art
- 110 Lunar calendar** When to plant vegetables and herbs in summer
- 116 DIY** Build your own planter box with a bug-proof cover

Regulars

- 138 180°** The Drakensberg casts a special spell no matter the season or the weather, says Harvey Tuckett

PHOTOS GREG COX, SAMANTHA REINDERS, PETER VAN NOORD, WILLEM VAN DEN BERG, MICKY HOYLE



Cover

PHOTO IAN GOODES

MODELS
MARTINA KLOPPER,
IAN GOODES,
JACK THE BOUVIER DES
FLANDRES AND
HUNTER THE AFRICANIS,
PHOTOGRAPHED AT THEIR
HOME IN KORINGBERG

EDITORS' LETTER



PHOTO ANRI MATTHEE

Change: a blessing in disguise

Exactly nine years ago to the day, things were a little more hectic than they are today – and today is not exactly uneventful because the 37th deadline is upon us. Back then we were busy sending the first issue of *Platteland* to the printing press – a shot in the dark at a time when no other publishers were launching new magazines.

And here we are, still going strong, thanks to every person who has parted with money to read the magazine, of course. We are also indebted to people like Elana Bruwer, who is advertising her business on the opposite page and has allowed us to share her exceptional story (page 50); and Ina Paarman, who has been advertising in *Platteland* since our third issue – and reads our magazine!

Then we also have to thank towns such as De Rust, where people care enough to make a difference and receive us with open arms.

Yes, the magazine's price has gone up over the years (like everything else), but in general we've kept a steady hand on the tiller in times when many others have gone under. We are thankful to be able to report that, after nine years and 37 issues, *Platteland* is doing well.

That's why it came as quite a blow to learn that Putin's antics in Europe have caused the price of paper to skyrocket, to the extent that our colleagues on the business side were forced to make a plan. That is why the magazine in your hands looks and feels slightly different.

After our initial shock at the changes in paper stock and format, we decided not to mope but to seize the opportunity and give the magazine a bit of an update. We are satisfied with the paper that has been selected, because it suits the aesthetics of what *Platteland* aspires to be – perhaps even better than before. The more compact format, too, feels good in one's hands. And then we tip our hats to our art director, Sean Robertson, who works with the content in such a sensible and sensitive way. What do you think?

Help us to do even better by introducing the magazine to new readers: if every existing reader got one other reader on board, we'd have all the more reason to be thankful next year, in Year 10.

Thank you. And enjoy the breather; we all really deserve one this year.

Johan & Peter



The Summer 2022/23 issue will be distributed countrywide from **27 February 2023**. Email us at helloplatteland@gmail.com if by the end of that week you have not been able to find a copy.

go! Platteland

The slow life is the good life

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HOMEMADE



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Factory Shop: **Weekdays** 9am - 5pm **Saturdays** 9am - 1pm Closed Sundays

Coffee in Garden @ Elana's Saturdays only 9am - 1pm

Family Fun Runs once a month on Saturdays.

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We offer you the convenience of a Food Factory Shop and on Saturdays *Coffee in Garden @ Elana's*. We open our own lush shady farm garden in front of the Factory Shop for the public to enjoy Barista coffee and freshly baked pancakes underneath the huge trees.

Our farm offers a special events venue for small intimate gatherings and once a month we host a 3km Family fun run. Bring your kids to enjoy a farm tour on our unique "Drie Eike Mini farm train" or to play on the jungle gym, while you relax or browse through the Factory shop, filled with jams, preserves, marmalades, dressings, sauces, olives, pickles, cordials and sweets, to name just a few of the delectables created in our cannery on the farm.

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Chitchat

So we paddled through the dam wall

winning letter

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the article about Vanderkloof and the Vanderkloof Dam in your Spring 2022 issue! It reminded me of a canoe trip I did with my four brothers and a friend in December 1973 – and I thought I'd share a few photos with you.

The six of us paddled down the Orange River from the Gariep Dam to Prieska – a distance of about 450km, which we covered in 10 days. I was 18.

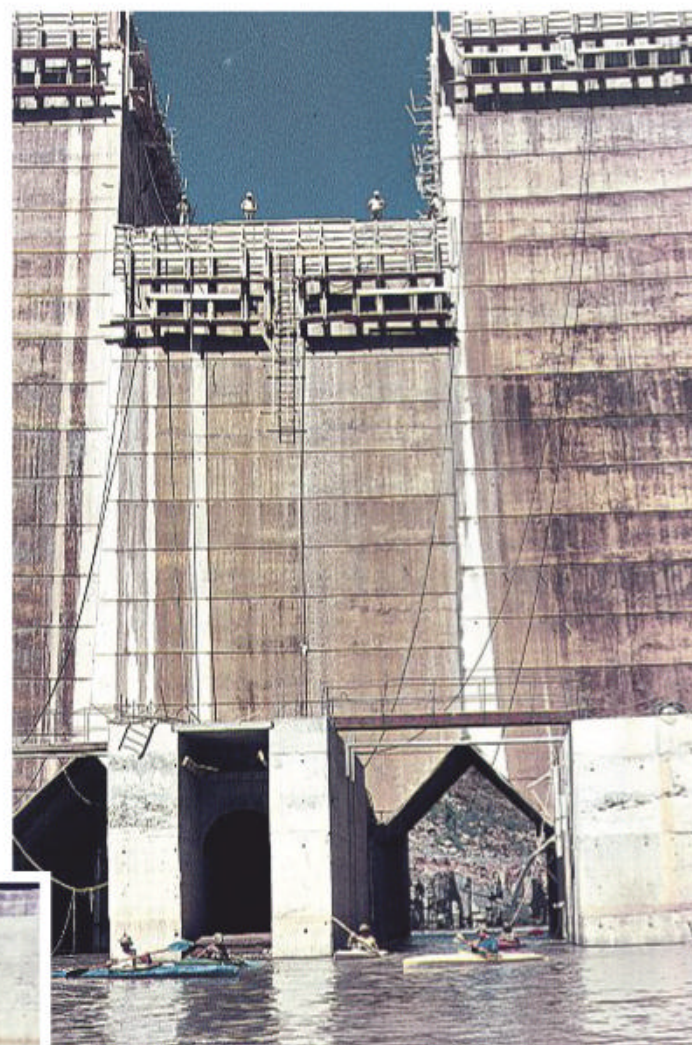
The Vanderkloof Dam wall was under construction. They were busy pouring concrete on the north side of the river, and the south side had been drained and the terrain had been cleared down to bedrock in preparation for the concrete to be laid. So we had no other option but to go through a tunnel in the dam wall. It was such a special occasion that my brother Francois took out his Pentax camera and asked us to pause on the fairly calm, slow-flowing water so he could take

photos of us. (We'd packed the camera in a watertight Tupperware container, which we kept tied to an inner tube to keep it from sinking in case the canoe capsized.) We recently had the colour slides of the trip digitised.

It was a little daunting to approach the upstream side of the wall and then to paddle through the giant tunnel! Now, how many people in South Africa can say they've done that?

Thank you for the article.

Dirk de Bruin
PRETORIA



ABOVE Francois de Bruin captured this photo of the five other adventurers just after they'd paddled through a tunnel in the Vanderkloof Dam wall. **LEFT** Dirk de Bruin was 18 when they undertook this paddling trip in 1973.



Dirk de Bruin from Pretoria will receive an Ina Paarman gift pack, worth more than R1 200, for his winning letter. It contains a selection of products, including a stainless steel rack with 14 spice mixes and a complete set of Ina Paarman's recipe booklets. Convenience is key when it comes to Ina Paarman's products, but not at the expense of taste, flavour and health. This extensive range of products is made in the traditional way from fresh seasonal ingredients – perfect for lending every meal a gourmet touch. Visit paarman.co.za for recipes or to shop online – and try the special Christmas menu on page 128–137 which Ina compiled for *Platteland* from her new book.



**WE'D
LOVE
TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**

Write to us and tell us about your move to the platteland or your dreams of doing so, the characters in your town, the things you love... or the things that bug you. Go to platteland.net and click on "English" and then "Contact" to write your letter, or send an email to helloplatteland@gmail.com, or post it to Platteland Letters, PO Box 526, Moorreesburg 7310. Include your name and surname and, importantly, the town where you live. Platteland reserves the right to edit and shorten letters at our discretion.

Witness to love over many years

I refer to Dave Pepler's article on blue-gum trees in the Winter 2022 issue of *Platteland*.

In 2016, I had the privilege of travelling through the Northern Cape, which gave me the opportunity to see my hometown, Kuruman, again.

I was disappointed at the neglect of the terrain around The Eye of Kuruman and at the high crime rate in the town centre. But the worst was when I visited Kalahari High School, only to find that the tallest old blue gum on the school grounds had been cut down by human – or inhumane – hands.

There used to be a few blue gums on the grounds. Over the years they offered shade and shelter – and the opportunity for young love to flourish – to so many of Kalahari's boys and girls, both during and after school hours. It might even be the reason this old blue gum had thrived.

I'd give anything to find out how old that tree was when it was felled. Best regards, and thank you for a wonderful magazine.

**Leon Venter
KIMBERLEY**



Leon Venter would like to know how old the blue gum was that used to tower over the Kalahari High School's grounds in Kuruman.

Sold... and hooked!

As I rushed to the checkout at my local supermarket this morning, the latest issue of *Platteland* caught my eye... with a dog wearing a flower crown on the cover. I love animals, so I quickly flipped through the magazine.

Happy childhood memories came flooding back of our garden and the dahlias my late father grew. He loved them, and we always had bunches in the house. That article also reminded me of my two (now late) ducks, Stoffel and Princess Peachy, who died tragically nearly six years ago. Proper pest control, ducks are.

And just when I thought that article persuaded me to buy the magazine, I saw "Power to the people". I'm an urban black South African woman, so the title intrigued me. I was sold.

Back home, sitting in the sun during loadshedding, I'm deeply grateful for the article "Power to the people". Yes, you can buy an alternative power source, but it must be really satisfying to make your own. I love the step-by-step approach to building one's own power supply source and the notes that demystify the technology. I find the reasons given for particular options invaluable. Kids should be taught how to do this in school.

The cherry on top was the article about Tori Stowe's awesome work here in the Eastern Cape. It makes me proud of the powerful work done in this province.

Thank you, *Platteland*. This issue touches my heart and meets the needs of our turbulent times.

PS. Tomorrow I will take a drive out of town to explore more rural living options.

**Daphne Chonon
EAST LONDON >**

A stoep... and a sanctuary

During the hard lockdown in 2020, my husband made a dream of mine come true when he extended and enclosed our stoep. It was certainly not an easy job; it took weeks... months. My dream slowly took shape in front of my eyes.

They say a young girl's first hero is her father. Well, my husband couldn't have asked for a better right-hand person than our 10-year-old daughter. She even got handy with a screwdriver, helping him.

It was a remarkable transformation from a stoep into a sanctuary. It was our family's hangout and haven during the pandemic.

It's where we as a family gather around the table in the evenings to talk about our day, sharing the good and the bad.

I've realised anew that you don't need a big budget or major

resources to tackle a project together to create a happy place for your family.

**Lynette Strydom
GQEBERHA**



Feathered frivolity on my doorstep

At a certain time of the day, I like to just sit quietly and observe. The mundane becomes exceptional. That's when you truly see and learn to really look.

With a mug of coffee in hand, I gaze at the piece of veld in front of me. The sun is sinking slowly, the last golden rays setting the Bushveld thorn trees aglow. A deep sense of peace comes over me.

Yellow-billed, orange-legged thrushes scuttle around searching for food, every now and again standing still with a cock of the head. Blue waxbills with their powder-blue colouring scurry on the ground looking for insects. A red-chested cuckoo calls "wheat-way-woe" in search of a mate. Lapwings land noisily, then screech shrilly as they run across the veld. Bulbuls raise their crest in self-defence, looking about for supper. Cape turtle doves pursue and chase one

another. Speckled pigeons fly past on their way to their roost. A flock of turacos make a red-winged turn over the veld, then disappear into the distance. A spurfowl, sensing the impending darkness, herds her two chicks towards their nest. A black bird I don't recognise takes a few pecks at the grass, its black feathers gleaming in the last of the sun's rays, then takes off and flies away.

The helmeted guineafowl say their last good-bye for the day, running around and duck-ducking as they chase one another, doing their graceful "spotted dance". They're beautiful, with their white-speckled feathers, thin blue neck, and prominent red helmet that gave them their name. (Their scientific name is even more impressive: *Numida meleagris*.)

It's no wonder guineafowl are among Africa's most painted birds – artists enjoy capturing them on

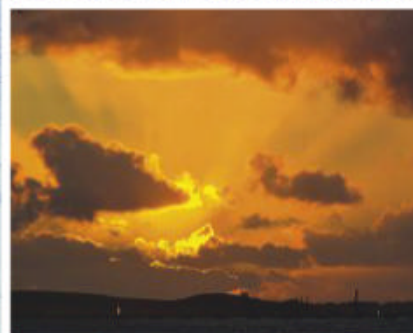
canvas, whether in oils or water colours. Those odd little bodies simply beg to be drawn.

I recall my own attempt: a fabric collage. The dark-blue fabric with the white specks immediately caught my eye in the shop. And my collage took me into the fantasy world of the guineafowl. When I stuck on the eyes, it came alive, with its own story. It was a joyful experience.

I've long finished my coffee, but my cup runneth over with gratitude. I'm grateful that I get to be part of another joyful experience. With their distinctive "kirrdi" call, the guineafowl take flight and disappear into the dusk.

The Bushveld draws the curtain on the day and the evening star sparkles. I go back inside with a grateful heart: grateful to be a Bushveld plattelander!

**Denese Eloff-Rheeder
BELA BELA, LIMPOPO**



West Coast pleasures

I was intrigued to find the article “The Velddrif hustle: Boats, bazaars and bakkems” by Carla Redelinghuys in the Spring 2022 issue of *Platteland*, since my wife, Sue, and I have visited “unassuming Velddrif”.

Interestingly, the West Coast region borders the Atlantic Ocean and extends from Bloubaai in the south to the provincial border in Namaqualand in the north, all within the Western Cape. It is a remote strip of coastline, just off the R27 to the north, well known for its spectacular fields of flowers in spring, West Coast hospitality, wild and desolate coastline, peace and tranquillity, as well as the freezing cold waters of the Atlantic!

One interesting town is Loeriesfontein. It lies 82 km north of Calvinia and 63 km north-east

of Nieuwoudtville, on the southern edge of the Bushmanland plains. It is said that, a long time ago, a party of trekboers stopped at the fountain for water and listened to the birdsong of a colony of loeries, and so named the fountain the Afrikaans equivalent of ‘loerie spring’, or Loeriesfontein.

Muisboskerm restaurant is another attraction on the West Coast – the name essentially refers to a shelter built from a kind of shrub called *muiskos* by the native herdsmen that used to migrate in search of pasture and water for their herds and flocks.

Muisboskerm is a family business run by the Turner family since the beginning, and has been trading for 30 years. It is an outdoor restaurant right on the beach, just above the high-water mark. They offer

crayfish, but the best is the fresh fish from the West Coast waters – baked, smoked and grilled. Pickled herring and mouth-watering local-is-yokel paella as well as old-style venison, lamb or tripe stew are prepared using ingredients straight from the veld. Coffee and koeksisters round things off nicely!

Langebaan is a very popular part of the West Coast, yet it feels more secluded. The whole landscape is beautiful and the lagoon stretches over a large area. There is such a lot to explore along its shores.

When visiting the West Coast, one finds that the farm butter melts into the soft bread, and as you lather your own grape jam onto the slice, you lose touch with the rest of the world!

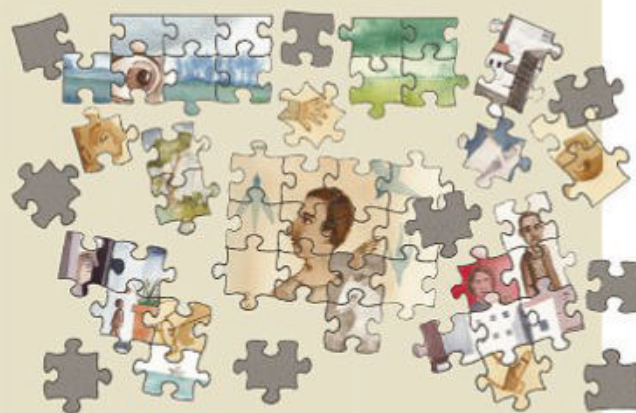
Martin Briggs
PORT ELIZABETH

Memories...

I refer to Ryno Eksteen’s column “A puzzle of nostalgia” in the Spring 2022 issue. I thoroughly enjoyed his writing style – the conversational tone made it feel as if he were chatting with the reader over a cup of coffee.

He uses genial local realism in describing the village where he grew up – Ryno would only reveal that it’s somewhere in the Southern Cape; it remains a missing piece of the puzzle. These are splendid memories one cherishes for the rest of one’s life. Do such towns still exist in South Africa?

Pieter Smit
WORCESTER



News & diary

Summer is a time to unwind and catch up with loved ones. Here are a few suggestions for festive season celebrations – discover good food and drink, decor to inspire you, and festivals and markets in abundance.

COMPILED BY ANRI MATTHEE

Fiery inspiration

Two gingers walk into a bar... No, it's not the start of a bad joke – it's how Two Gingers Gin was born!

When Simon Cranswick and Wynand de Vries met early in 2020, they immediately hit it off thanks to a shared sense of humour and happy disposition, as well as their rare hair colour, of course. While on a game drive in KwaZulu-Natal, the two friends wondered what it would be like to capture the spicy fragrance of the curry bush in a gin bottle.

There's no curry bush gin yet, but the Two Gingers brand has been

racking up awards. Its Pink Pomelo and Soul Flame gins both took double gold at this year's SA Craft Gin Awards, and the Spice Route gin was recognised with a gold classification. Both the Spice Route and Soul Flame had already been awarded gold at the Merit Wine & Spirit Awards – so it's hard to believe Two Gingers sold their first bottle of gin only in February 2022!

Simon says they have big plans for their first birthday celebrations. "We're inviting all our top clients, business partners and suppliers to

the distillery in Muizenberg, where we'll host a gin tasting, but also just a lekker braai for everyone. We just want to give back and appreciate those that have supported us thus far!"

Two Gingers recently introduced La Primavera, its fourth unique gin. It has wild jasmine and zesty lemongrass on the nose, with earthy undertones of iris root and angelica working together to, as Simon and Wynand put it, make your taste buds tingle. The two have big plans for their brand. They want



LEFT Wynand de Vries and Simon Cranswick have more in common than their hair colour – their lust for life is evident in the jubilant flavours of the gins they produce.

BELOW The tasting room at Two Gingers' Gember Distillery – named for the Dutch word for "ginger" – has an open-plan design because Simon and Wynand wanted to reveal the expertise and art behind the distilling process.



to supply an airline with gin, and they are hoping to secure export opportunities when they join 31 other gin suppliers exhibiting in the main hall at the Liverpool Gin Festival. And they haven't forgotten about their plans for the curry bush gin.

Where? Visit the Gember Distillery at Unit 6, Platinum Park, 101 Capricorn Drive, Muizenberg, Cape Town.

Contact [twogingers.com](https://www.twogingers.com)

info@gemberdistillery.com

[@twogingersgin](https://www.instagram.com/twogingersgin) [Two Gingers](https://www.facebook.com/TwoGingers)



WIN Two lucky readers will each win a bottle of Two Gingers Gin's brand-new La Primavera gin worth R445. Go to [platteland.net](https://www.platteland.net), click on "Win" and fill in the form using the keywords "Summer" and "Gingers". The closing date is 24 February 2023.

Ah, coffee!

World-class coffee in your own back yard, with a new flavour to experiment with every month – that was Dario Scilipoti's dream.

Dario's love of world coffees and a desire to make them more accessible led to the opening of Bluebird Coffee Roastery in 2018.

"My goal is to help you understand coffee better, to give you access to good coffee you'd usually only find overseas, and to create a bond with the people who cultivate and produce it," Dario says.

He introduces his customers to new coffees through a subscription service whereby a box filled with different flavours and blends is delivered once a month.

Bluebird is proud of the quality of its coffees and its ethical trade principles. "Our aim is to deliver good-quality coffee to home users," says Katie Burnett, creative director at Bluebird.

She recommends the House Blend package to new subscribers. "It is a choice of our three house blends, designed by the customer. Ideally, this subscription would be a starting point for those who are new to



Bluebird Coffee Roastery wants to make high-quality world coffees more accessible to South Africans.

speciality coffees that have more complex flavours."

For more serious coffee lovers, Katie recommends the Curated subscription. "The customer can choose between a 250g bag and a 1kg bag, and whether they want two, three or four bags in their box. Every month, a new headliner coffee is selected by our team. It is a coffee that is not yet available to the public – it's generally released in the online shop two to three months after it was made available to subscribers.

"The second coffee is always a past favourite that most of the subscribers would know. The subscriber can opt to be a part of

our Blue Bag Programme, which means we include an unlabelled bag of coffee that the subscriber would have tasted already and they have to guess what it is."

The Bluebird team is set to move to its newly built roastery in Howick early in December. There, they'll be roasting beans and training baristas – and sharing many cups of coffee, naturally!

Where? Bluebird Coffee Roastery, 36 Main Road, Howick, KwaZulu-Natal
Contact bluebirdcoffeeroastery.co.za
 hello@bluebirdcoffeeroastery.co.za
 @bluebirdcoffeeroastery
 Bluebird Coffee Roastery

A brew in summer, though?

There's no reason the heat of an African summer should put you off the thought of a cuppa. The Bluebird team has come up with a range of innovative ways to enjoy your coffee even in summer. Katie shares these two:

- "For the past four summers, we've been having **Sprojays** in the office – it's espresso with orange juice and ice. Choose a bag of our Migoti Hill Natural or Primavera Family Coffee, make an espresso, add orange juice and ice, and voilà!"
- "If you don't have an espresso machine at home, we also love **filter coffee with ice**. The simpler, the better."

WIN One lucky reader will win a subscription box from Bluebird Coffee Roastery containing two speciality coffees and one secret "Blue Bag" coffee, valued at R309. Go to platteland.net, click on "Win" and fill in the form using the keywords "Summer" and "Bluebird". The closing date is 24 February 2023.



Make a wish by the light of a firefly

A firefly is not a fly – it is, in fact, a beetle that undergoes metamorphosis shortly after the eggs hatch in January.

This means in the southern hemisphere summer is the best time for firefly-watching, especially in the winter rainfall areas. The pupae transform into adult fireflies and glow during mating season to attract a mate.

Handré Basson, a master's student in entomology at Stellenbosch University, says fireflies are a lot more common in South Africa than we realise – we just don't recognise them without their light.

"If a layperson spotted a firefly during the daytime, they might not look twice because these insects have no defining features to discern them from other similar insects," he says.

"About 30 firefly species occur in SA, belonging to two subfamilies, Luciolinae and Lampyrinae. "Although 30 sounds like a large number, it's actually not that many because our country is so diverse."

A safe haven

A few years ago, the committee of the Leisure Bay Conservancy in KwaZulu-Natal realised that special care should be taken with

the conservation of the surrounding wetlands. As part of their efforts, the southern hemisphere's first firefly sanctuary was established early in 2020.

"We knew from seeing them in the years gone by that there were many fireflies whose home it was! So we decided to make it a conservation area for fireflies (and the wetland) and in so doing (hopefully) ensure that future generations will have the privilege of seeing the magical little fireflies – the little creature with a light in its bum!" says Jenny Koen of the Leisure Bay Conservancy.

"A remarkable fact is that the light they produce and emit is cold light. Even in our advanced scientific world, man has not been able to create cold light – so, bottom line, fireflies are smarter than we are!"



ABOVE The larvae of the Lampyrinae subfamily of fireflies live mainly on snails – a larva can kill an adult snail in a single bite. It makes these insects excellent biological pest controllers.

LEFT Light pollution from homes and streetlights can confuse fireflies and interfere with the mating process because males may mistake these lights for those of female fireflies. The females usually excrete pheromones to lure males, but not always with success.



LEFT Typical Lampyrinae fireflies, in this case the species *Lychnobius conspicua*: the female (left), which doesn't have wings, looks similar to the larvae, whereas the male (right) looks like a typical winged beetle.

The greatest threat to these insects is the loss of habitat due to encroachment on natural wetlands. The Leisure Bay Firefly Sanctuary, which turns three in March 2023, is therefore an excellent area to view fireflies.

"There is no entrance fee to the sanctuary – it is open to the public 24/7/365. It was created to protect the fireflies and other creatures like frogs and toads that live there, and the wetland."

Where? Visit the Leisure Bay Conservancy at Leisure Crest, Port Edward, KZN. It stretches from the Boboyi River in the south to the Thongazi River in the north, and from the Indian Ocean in the east to the R61 in the west.
Contact leisurebay-conservancy.co.za
f Leisure Bay Conservancy

Handré's firefly-watching tips

There are particular hot spots where fireflies are more prevalent than in other areas.

Fireflies prefer wet wooded areas where the larvae would have enough water, food and shelter – such as dry leaves, tree stumps and rocks. (The adults live for only two to four weeks. They don't have a functional mouth so they don't feed.)

Adult fireflies are nocturnal. The best time to look out for them is a warm, windless, dark night. Your timing is important: they come out about an hour after sunset, and they're usually only active for a few hours, not throughout the night (apart from some species with a much shorter lifespan).



Giving felines a fighting chance

Valerie Steinmann's coffee shop is the first of its kind on the continent. It's one where you need to keep an eye on the milk jug on your table, because one of the 22 cats she's adopted from the Animal Welfare Society Stellenbosch over the years just might dare to make a dash for a sip.

"We stopped at 22, because it's the maximum number of cats we're allowed to have," Valerie says.

Cat cafés have long been popular social and relaxation destinations in Asia, but Valerie, a lifelong animal lover, decided early in 2017 that such a café could take a different form in South Africa.

"I adore Japan. I've been there a few times and saw the cat cafés, but I didn't like the idea that the cats are kept in one or two rooms. I want them to be able to roam freely," Valerie says. "And that's the big difference between our café and many of the ones abroad."

The café started as a gift shop selling cat-themed and -related items – inspired by a shop Valerie saw during a trip to Switzerland. It grew from there, and today Cat Heaven truly lives up to its name. "I think it's one of the few gift shops in the world where you'll find such a wide variety of gifts for cats and cat lovers," she says.

She hopes her eccentric cats encourage people to adopt pets rather than buy them from breeders. "I don't

like it that people make money out of animals or breed them for profit. Our shelters are packed with abused and neglected animals in need of a home. I want people to leave here knowing that you don't necessarily have to spend money on an expensive breed."

The money Cat Heaven generates goes towards caring for the cats. Full-time staff look after them, and each cat is even brushed twice a day!

"All our cats love socialising – they

were so unhappy during lockdown!" Valerie says. "I think our most popular cat is Paulie – and he happens to be the cake thief! He loves socialising and makes everyone fall in love with him."

Where? Visit Cat Heaven Gift Shop and Rescue Cat Café at 35 Bright Street, Somerset West.

Contact Valerie ☎ 083 357 2527

✉ fvsteinmann@icloud.com

🐾 catheaven.co.za 📷 @catheaven southafrica 📺 Cat Heaven



Valerie Steinmann opened Cat Heaven in Somerset West in 2017.

Nostalgia in technicolour

Not only does Carmen Niehaus know good food, but she also knows how to make food look good. As the long-time food editor of *You* and *Huisgenoot* magazines, Carmen needs no introduction. Over the years she has collected a wide variety of enamelware, silverware and other kitchen collectibles. Together with Swier, a brand known for its photo-designer digital prints on quality materials, she created still lifes using these objects together with colourful fruit, flowers and other elements to reflect the beauty of each of the four seasons. Daniela Louw photographed them, and the photos have been printed on fabric and glass, and now feature on tea towels, tablecloths, aprons, scatter cushions, glass cutting boards and splashbacks.

"These designs are special to



Food writer Carmen Niehaus has designed a range of homeware items in collaboration with Swier.

me and bring back many good memories," Carmen says. It's important to her that the items are functional. "They should be not only pretty but also practical

and versatile."

The range is available from the Swier online shop and at selected stores countrywide.

Contact [swier.co.za](https://www.swier.co.za) 083 409 6788



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Dates to diarise

WESTERN CAPE

Mead tasting

MAITLAND, CAPE TOWN
3 & 10 December 2022

Book your spot on one of Cape Town Meadery's tasting days if you'd like to explore the unique flavours of mead, a fermented drink made of honey that's as elegant as wine but with the creativity of craft beer.

Tickets R120 at Quicket

Contact capetownmeadery.com ernst@capetownmeadery.com
☎ 083 236 3244
f CapeTownMeadery

Coastal Foraging Experience with Veld & Sea

SCARBOROUGH BEACH, CAPE POINT

10 & 11 December 2022;
7, 8, 21 & 22 January 2023;
4 & 5 February 2023

Discover what the sea has to offer by foraging for ingredients along the Cape shoreline with which to create a three-course meal. Remember to pack your water shoes, camera and plenty of sunscreen, and if you want mussels, buy a permit from the Post Office.

Tickets From R600 at Quicket

Contact veldandsea.com
veldandsea@gmail.com
☎ 072 234 4804

Keto and sugar-free cooking workshop

PRINGLE BAY

18 & 21 December 2022

A low-carb, high-fat diet helped Brian Berkman to lose a lot of weight and, along with a more active



Bring along friends for a day of light-hearted fun at the Oddball Olympics.

KWAZULU-NATAL

Oddball Olympics

DURBAN NORTH

4 February 2023

Fun and games are guaranteed at this event! Enter along with three trusted teammates, and compete against other teams in a series of physical activities – it's great for team-building. Afterwards there's a prize-giving and a party with music. Note that participants have to be 23 or older.

Entry fee R1 000 per team of four; book via Quicket

Contact ☎ 063 877 6570 bosseeventsconcepts@gmail.com f Oddball Olympics Durban North

lifestyle, to bring his type 2 diabetes under control. Now, this journalist and marketing expert shares his tips for cooking healthy, easy meals at home – it's specifically marketed as "entertaining for the lazy cook".

Tickets R800 at Quicket

Contact brianberkman.com
☎ 083 441 8765

Delheim Harvest Festival

STELLENBOSCH

28–29 January 2023

Join the locals in giving thanks to Mother Nature for her bounty at this family-friendly harvest festival. Join a tractor tour through the vineyards, pick and

stomp grapes, and listen to live music. Then tuck into the harvest feast, a spread inspired by various cuisines both local and international, and enjoy top-class wines.

Tickets R650 per adult and R350 per child at Quicket

Contact delheim.com
info@delheim.com
☎ 021 888 4600 f Delheim
delheimwines

Writing retreat

TEMENOS, MCGREGOR

8–12 February 2023

If you're suffering from writer's block, a retreat with literary agent Sarah Bullen might be just the ticket. Beginners and experienced writers alike are invited

to bring their project – in any genre – and spend the retreat writing together with others and sharing ideas.

Tickets From R6 000 at Quicket

Contact thewritingroom.co.za info@thewritingroom.co.za
f thewritingroomcommunity

GAUTENG

Christmas Baking Workshop

LITTLE KITCHEN, CENTURION

8 December 2022

Here's some entertainment for the young ones during the festive season. Children between 2 and 16 years old are invited to bake scrumptious gingerbread cookies and make Christmas tree decorations. They'll each receive a cookie-cutter set to take home.

Tickets R350 at Quicket

Contact little-kitchen.co.za
☎ 083 239 01087
littlekitchenkids

KWAZULU-NATAL

Gin & Tonic Festival

DURBAN

26 December 2022

Continue the festive spirit at this boutique mini festival. You can expect dedicated bars for citrus, berry and classic gins. There'll also be music, stalls and a variety of foods. Note: no under-18s.

Tickets From R600 at Quicket

Contact ☎ 064 809 2066 (Georgios) f Durban Gin and Tonic Festival

EASTERN CAPE

Festival of Lights

BETHESDA ARTS CENTRE, NIEU-BETHESDA

31 December 2022

Ring in the new year at this wonderful festival at the Bethesda Arts Centre. The gathering has been an institution for the past 20 years, and promises to be a family-friendly celebration with song, dance, unity and hundreds of handmade paper lanterns. Make it an item on your Eastern Cape bucket list!

Tickets R230 per adult, R115 per child 6–12 years old

Contact 📞 049 841 1731 or 073 028 8887

✉️ gerald@bethesdatower.co.za (Gerald)

✉️ sandra@bethesdatower.co.za (Sandra)



The Lantern Parade during the Festival of Lights symbolises hope and renewal at the start of the new year.

MPUMALANGA

Venter en Vriende

SUDWALA CAVES,

MBOMBELA

6 January 2023

Singer and pianist Berno Venter got together a group of talented friends in the industry to perform in the Sudwala Caves. It promises to be a music experience to remember.

Tickets R130 at Quicket

Contact 📱 Sudwala Caves

✉️ info@sudwalacaves.com

📞 083 446 0228

EASTERN CAPE

Ox Braai

BATHURST

28–29 December 2022

The popular Bathurst Ox Braai, a tradition that started in 1981, returns to the town's showgrounds after a two-year absence during the pandemic. Organisers of the 24-hour braai and social event encourage visitors to bring friends, cool boxes and tonnes of team spirit!

Tickets From R200 at Quicket

Contact ✉️ oxbraai@gmail.com 📱 oxbraai 📱 oxbraai

Christmas spirit for days (and nights)!

The festive season goes hand in hand with goodwill, community and splendour, all of which you'll find in abundance at an old-fashioned Christmas market. Visit the Facebook group "Christmas Markets Kersmarkte in South Africa" for a list of markets. We selected three from the list:

Springfontein Christmas Market

PRIOR GRANGE CRICKET CLUB, SPRINGFONTEIN

2 December 2022

This is the first year the people of Springfontein will have their very own night market. Visitors can look forward to stalls stocked with delicious edibles, home-made crafts, wool products, fresh produce, clothing, shoes and home-baked goods. Kids will be entertained while the grown-ups pay a visit to the beer tent or gin bar. (Rumour has it Santa Claus will be dropping by, if you happen to be around at 18:00.)

Contact 📞 072 124 1659 (Pieta) or 076 310 8324 (Blackie)

Uvongo Christmas Market

THE MARKETPLACE, UVONGO

9 December 2022 – 15 January 2023

With more than 200 stalls, this is KwaZulu-Natal's largest craft market, and it's going even bigger this festive season! Visit the Christmas Market for handmade products, home-baked goodies, stylish garments, one-of-a-kind decor pieces and much more.

Contact 📱 topmarkets.co.za ✉️ bookings@the-marketplace.co.za 📞 060 961 6034

Langebaan Christmas Market

LANGEBAAAN TOWN HALL

23 December 2022

If you're in the area and you have some last-minute Christmas shopping to do, don't worry – this market has you covered with an array of unique products by local entrepreneurs, small businesses, artists and artisans.

Contact ✉️ langebaanmarket@gmail.com 📞 072 638 2972

📱 Langebaan Market



News about markets and bazaars

Let us know of events in your region that are taking place between

1 March and 31 May 2023 – the deadline for inclusion in the magazine is

9 January 2023. ✉️ helloplatteland@gmail.com 📱 platteland.net 📱 Platteland

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Skin Creamery's skin products contain organic plant oils such as baobab, jojoba, Kalahari melon seed, marula and prickly pear. Skin Creamery skincreamery.com



Drink infusion with dried fruits and spices for gin, water or iced tea (party box with 10 packets) about R100 Mooihoek Strawberry Farm mooihoek.com and selected SPAR stores

Tall gin glass R86

Woolworths woolworths.co.za

Short glass R45

Mr Price Home mrphome.com

Natural Sunscreen SPF 30

with *Aloe ferox* and argan oil R290

Bytjie Salf www.bytjie.com

Straw hat R350

Baraka Gifts and Décor barakashop.co.za

Towel (80 cm x 165 cm) R229

H&M Home hm.com/za



Let's go to town

To put together this selection of cool buys, we followed the sun to Cape Town, Carnarvon, Citrusdal, Darling, George, Green Point, Hankey, Joburg, Lynedoch, Paarl, Pietermaritzburg, Simondium, Wellington and Westlake.

BY MARIAN VAN WYK

PHOTOS GREG COX



Mini Christmas-tree ornaments

made of scrap wood R80 each

Gerhard Woodcrafts [@gerhardwoodcrafts](https://www.instagram.com/gerhardwoodcrafts)

gerhard_dupreez@yahoo.com



Leather cable organiser R495

Baraka Gifts and Décor barakashop.co.za



Fig Liqueur made with fynbos honey and fig leaves (750 ml) R300

Darling Honey darlinghoney.co.za



Seagrass hanging planter

(22 cm high) R170

Mr Price Home mrphome.com



Rooibos Pet Food Supplement

with anti-inflammatory turmeric and rosehip R150

Carmiën carmienteas.co.za



Royal XL standard linen pillow case
(450 mm x 700 mm) R990
Kaapsche Hollandsche
[kaapschehollandsche.com](https://www.kaapschehollandsche.com)



Dulce de leche
with smoked sea salt flakes (200 ml) R50
Catharina [083 266 2738](tel:0832662738)



Roasted coffee beans in a reusable tin:
Crazy Duchess dark roast (250 g) R160
The Duke's Blend medium slightly dark roast
(250 g) R130
Monarch Coffee Cartel
[monarchcoffeecartel.co.za](https://www.monarchcoffeecartel.co.za)



**Handmade Nutty Nougat in
56% Chocolate Tumbles** (80 g) R65
Winston & Julia [winstonandjulia.co.za](https://www.winstonandjulia.co.za)

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(1 m tall) with
a replaceable glass
funnel (200 mm high
and measures up to
35 mm rain) R390
iHouzit [ihouzit.com](https://www.ihouzit.com)



**Ultrasonic
essential oil diffuser** R499
OCO Life [ocolife.co.za](https://www.ocolife.co.za)



**Machine-washable Premium Comfy Plush
pet bed** (small) R349
Luna Life [lunalife.co.za](https://www.lunalife.co.za)
Flamingo worm with dried catnip
(29 cm) R160
Flamingo ping-pong balls
(packet of 4) R70
Vet World [vet-world.co.za](https://www.vet-world.co.za)



Naartjie marmalade
with lemon and vanilla pod – free of
artificial preservatives (250 ml) R55
Catharina [083 266 2738](tel:0832662738)



Sea Salt and African Rub
in a wooden gift box R335
Funky Ouma [funky-ouma.co.za](https://www.funky-ouma.co.za)



Extra Virgin Olive Oil (500ml) R165
Schattig schattig.co.za



Active leash made of leather and olive-coloured yacht rope (small to medium) R279
Doggy Doo bag dispenser made of leather, with a leash clip R259
Baxter and Co baxterandco.co.za



EcoFlow River Max portable power station with a capacity of 576Wh, a maximum total output of 1 800W, two AC sockets, and a detachable battery that fully recharges from a wall outlet within 96 minutes R13 999
EcoFlow za.ecoflow.com



Seagrass-and-bamboo lantern (37,5 cm tall) R799
Mr Price Home mrphome.com



Romanesco cauliflower seed R30
Six Degrees East 6degreeseast.co.za



Snow owl tea cosy made of hand-felted wool R490
Chic Fusion chicfusion.co.za



Extra-virgin olive oil trio: Blend, Frantoio and Coratina (3 x 500ml) R365
Babylonstoren shop.babylonstoren.com



Cotton/linen-blend tea towel with 35 illustrations by Jumarie du Toit R256
Blou Karoo lordcarnarvon@gmail.com
Wooden chopping board R99
H&M Home hm.com/za
Dipping bowl R50
Woolworths woolworths.co.za



Tannie Evita Jou Moerkoffie Arabica Coffee Beans and Ground Coffee (250g) R91 each
Evita se Perron evitaseperron.com/shop

MY TOWN

De Rust

The name says it all!



De Rust lies at the foot of the Swartberg, 2 km from the southern end of Meiringspoort, and holds a heavenly attraction for former city dwellers who, in the great natural beauty of the Little Karoo, have discovered the happiest versions of themselves.

TEXT **JOHAN VAN ZYL** PHOTOS **PETER VAN NOORD**



De Rust lies between the Swartberg (pictured) and the Kamanassie Mountains to the south. The entrance to Meiringspoort is between two foothills just beyond the town (the road visible here is the R341 to Willowmore). This photograph, taken from the De Rust Koppie, shows the section of the town that you wouldn't see if you're only passing through. The photo on page 25 shows the town from a different angle.



Despite being named Town of the Year by the kykNET magazine programme Kwêla 11 years ago, De Rust is still a place that many South Africans only pass through. It is – excuse my language – a damn shame.

Since receiving that accolade, a number of people have discovered it as a place to stretch their legs, refill the fuel tank, and get a coffee or a bite to eat on their way to somewhere else. A smaller number of people have spent the night in De Rust, usually also on their way to another destination.

It's as though the town was made for this purpose: Schoeman Street, a roughly 1km section of the N12 that runs through the town, gives the impression of an intestine designed to whisk things away

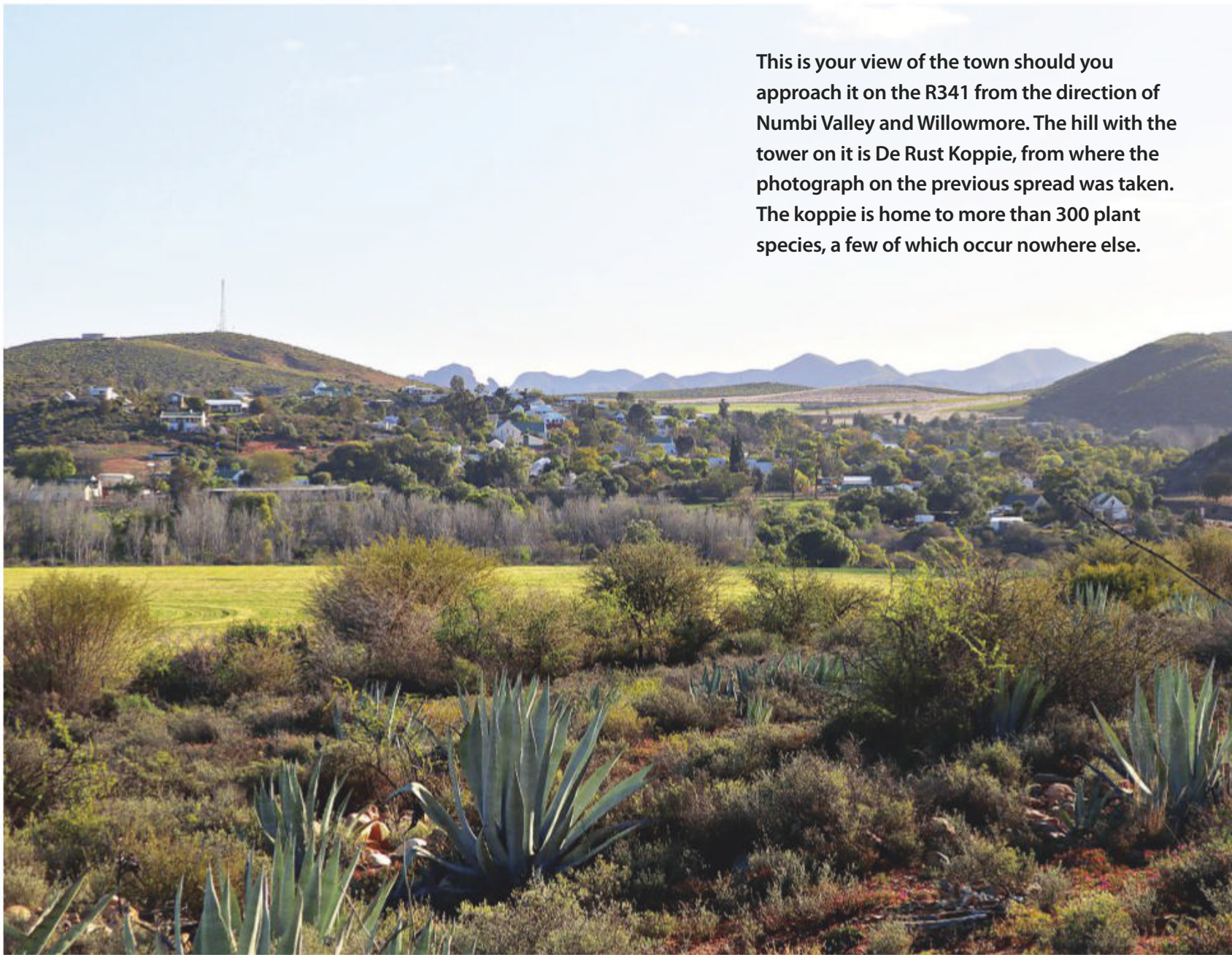
as fast as possible. What's more, almost all the town's businesses are situated along this broad street, which is lined with trees and a charming Karoo hotchpotch of shops, eateries, overnight accommodation places and private homes. Far too few motorists turn down the side streets where the greater part of the town – and more lovely Victorian and Karoo-style homes – lie "hidden". Yet, if you test the residents' response to this intestine theory, plus the fact that ill-mannered lorry drivers sometimes disturb the peace in the middle of the night with their air brakes, they answer like a speech choir: This one long, packed street serves the businesses very well.

Keep in mind that De Rust has never been a destination town – so if you want the local economy to receive a real injection you need to organise events such as half-

marathons, mountain-bike races and markets.

Just like everywhere else, the pandemic had an impact on the residents of De Rust and the suburb of Blomnek, and they and the businesses suffered under its effects. But it also led to community projects like soup kitchens and the 1 ha permaculture garden Spensplaas – where everyone who spent mornings working in the garden received a bowl of soup to eat and fresh vegetables to take home. At least 150 households were fed in this way. The pandemic also accelerated semigration, attracting a number of new residents with fresh energy and ideas to the town.

Even before the pandemic, in 2019, Crystelle Grobber and her husband Desvonde Slinger, both originally from KwaZulu-Natal, bought "two houses with a six-year plan" after looking at options in



This is your view of the town should you approach it on the R341 from the direction of Numbi Valley and Willowmore. The hill with the tower on it is De Rust Koppie, from where the photograph on the previous spread was taken. The koppie is home to more than 300 plant species, a few of which occur nowhere else.

Greyton, Barrydale, Robertson and Prince Albert. But when Covid hit and Desvonde's company moved back to London during lockdown, they decided to store their furniture in Cape Town and move to De Rust with a mattress and a few utensils to get the houses into shape.

"I don't know if it's because we'd made a conscious decision to live in a small town, but the transition and adjustment went really smoothly," Crystelle says. "We may no longer have the luxury of earning a salary, but life is so much simpler, and it's also busy. And if you have a day when you aren't feeling 100%, you just need to look at the scenic beauty and count your blessings."

Crystelle says in De Rust she began to have doubts about the so-called small-town syndrome, "because there truly is a great variety of interesting people and opinions, but no one cares about

what your house, car or clothing looks like."

"What's also great is that people from diverse age groups interact socially because, just as with your car and house, age doesn't matter here. Someone once said that in De Rust you don't have to worry any longer about things like whether you'll go to heaven one day, because you already live there."

This probably explains the almost super-natural equanimity you notice among residents of De Rust, even when they are talking about "the issues" in their town – something they all do reluctantly and apologetically, as if they are betraying it. In reality, these are the kind of problems that affect every platteland town nowadays: rising poverty and unemployment, accompanied by alcohol abuse, drug addiction and crime.

A notice has been posted in the >

OPPOSITE FAR LEFT Knieskottel, on the corner of Schoeman and Church streets, is the only bakery in De Rust.

OPPOSITE ABOVE RIGHT These signs are an invitation to passersby to step into Tolbos Trading in Schoeman Street.

OPPOSITE BELOW RIGHT Ray's Coffee Shop is on the left in this photo of Schoeman Street, taken from the Meiringspoort side. Lorries using this road to pass through town sometimes disturb the peace with their air brakes in the dead of night.



main road: “Please do not give money to the car guards or beggars.” But you also spot the quiet, dignified Jan Bezuidenhout in his luminous waistcoat. He is a member of the neighbourhood watch, which was started in 2017 and is financed by local businesses. Jan is among a group of “tourism assistants” appointed to keep an eye on the cars and shield tourists from beggars.

When *Platteland* visits Loraine Burger’s eclectic gift-and-coffee-shop Karoo Rouge, we meet her son Deon, who (among other things) bakes the pies sold here, and her husband, Callie, one of the founders of the neighbourhood watch. The Burgers, who were “big bikers” in their former lives and “owned a few King Pies from Boksburg to Delmas”, have been living in the town for eight years, but they had bought a plot back in 2002 and used to visit regularly before they started to build their house in 2013. “De Rust

is a true family town; the people are fairly quiet but awesome and unaffected, and they really care – in a very practical way. Everyone here is generous – maybe it’s a bag of onions, then some pumpkins – and they help quietly when people are suffering. Another thing: you won’t impress anyone here with your fancy car or house or clothes,” says Loraine, who jokingly refers to herself and Callie as “beauty and the brain”, because “I smile and chat, and he makes sure I’m not giving everything away free of charge”.

Callie’s involvement in the project to train members of the neighbourhood watch as tourism assistants, stemmed from a trip to Lesotho where everyone took along packets of sweets to hand out to hungry children begging at the roadside. “In a place where there isn’t a dentist... So our point of departure with the signs and patrols is that, in the long term, South

Africa doesn’t want to encourage a nation of beggars. It’s important for people to stop in the town, but they immediately drive on if they’re accosted by beggars.”

IF CHEF Niekie Eksteen and jeweller and goldsmith Soan Jacobs look familiar to you, it is because they have appeared in just about every article about De Rust over the past 15 years. Known for his flamboyant headgear and naughty sense of humour, Niekie is a well-known and exceptionally photogenic De Rust face who welcomes visitors like some steampunk circus ringmaster at their small coffee-gift-decor-plant shop Village Trading Post/Coffee on the Run, which these days plies its trade at the Caltex garage.

In their action-packed former life, they managed a guest house in Clubview, Centurion, among other things, but after passing through >



Loraine Burger is at the helm of Karoo Rouge. Pictured with her are her son Deon (left) and her husband Callie, who is involved with the neighbourhood watch and the training of the tourism assistants who patrol the main street.



Soan Jacobs and Niekie Eksteen (wearing the steampunk hat) swapped Pretoria for De Rust 15 years ago, and they haven't looked back. They're also happy with their decision to scale down their business, moving the Village Trading Post to a smaller space at the Caltex garage at the entrance to the town.



Crystelle Grobber, photographed here at the restaurant Pluim, and her husband bought two houses in De Rust in 2019, but decided during the lockdown rather to move here and renovate the properties. Now, they are here to stay.



Piet Smit has an astonishing assortment of collectibles and vintage items in his shop Mengelmoeskardoes. Depending on your age, you'll either spot items you've never seen before, or you'll recognise things you last saw in your grandma's house. Piet also sells items online.

The price of property

Most people who live in De Rust know the name Ann Meiring – just about every *inkommer* has bought their house through this estate agent (she now works for Rawson). Visit [rawson.co.za](https://www.rawson.co.za) and type "De Rust" into the search bar to view the houses, businesses and farms currently on the market, or call Ann on 081 777 4185. Here are three of our favourites:



R1,45 million

This charming three-bedroom cottage is a good option for a couple wanting to scale down. It has one bathroom, a kitchen, a living room, a large garage, a private courtyard and an indoor braai.



R2,295 million

This spacious house on a 2577 m² erf has three bedrooms and three bathrooms, a dining room, a kitchen (with an Aga stove!), a spacious entertainment area with braai facilities, a living room, a laundry room, a study, four garages and air-conditioning.



R1,14 million

This 9.5 ha farm has lovely views of the Swartberg. Besides a patch of land that's perfect for building a house, the rest of the property is covered by natural vegetation, including a koppie and a section next to a perennial river. It's not suitable for farming.

De Rust while on holiday, they bought a building on impulse.

In 2007, they moved to De Rust and opened the Village Trading Post restaurant and shop. Their enormous iron rooster outside on the pavement soon became a well-known landmark in the town.

“Shame, now the poor guy is almost hiding away outside in the garden,” says Niekie, brush in hand, as he expresses his newfound love of painting. Soan’s eyes focus a little further, beyond the garden, over the R62, to the entrance gate of the farm Voëlgesang. It formed part of the original De Rust farm, on which the town was founded in 1900. “What an incredible coincidence that we are exactly *here* today,” says Soan, who grew up on a karakul farm in Namibia. “I only found out later that my mother was born right here at Voëlgesang, where my grandparents were *bywoners*.”

They have never regretted their move to the platteland, not even after the pandemic and rising costs forced them to close down the Village Trading Post in its original incarnation. They still own the building, but they now have a much smaller, busier place with only two staff members and limited stock.

“As someone who grew up on a farm, I felt privileged as a young person to live in the city but I always thought I would retire somewhere one day that wasn’t likely to expand,” Soan says. “The moment our offer on the place in De Rust was accepted, however – I was 40 years old – I began to wonder why I’d spend another 20 years slaving in the city to pay off an expensive house.”

They laugh when asked whether they were the “gay pioneers” of De Rust. “You know, we just came here as Soan and Niekie, and learnt that the people of the platteland are incredibly easy and comfortable. Uncomplicated. Unlike me, Niekie is someone who draws his energy from other people. They say you don’t become older, you become worse – and the older I get, the easier I find it to lead a quiet life. We miss nothing. We don’t need anything. The only thing that does bother you is the poverty, which causes an incredible amount of stress at all levels of society.”

They are now letting the Village Post building to Piet Smit, who bought a house in the town a month before the hard lockdown in 2020.

Piet, who used to work for >



We photographed this lovely house in Schoeman Street, and only learnt later that it’s the home of Piet Smit of Mengelmoeskardoes.

In a nutshell

Distance from the big city? De Rust is 450 km from Cape Town and 340 km from Port Elizabeth. Large towns nearby are Oudtshoorn (35 km) and George (95 km).

Facilities Basic groceries, wine and hot food are available at Mikro (the correct name is in fact Sentra!), yet many residents travel “to town” (Oudtshoorn) once a week and “to the city” (George, or even Mossel Bay, which is 120 km away) once a month for bigger shopping trips.

Nearest hospitals, retirement facilities and schools The town has a primary school and a high school, a clinic on Dwars Road in Blomnek, and a veterinarian. In Oudtshoorn there is a provincial hospital and a Mediclinic, and George and Mossel Bay have private hospitals and specialist health services.

Nearest Woolies Oudtshoorn, George and Mossel Bay.

Municipality De Rust has a small municipal office (and town library) at 9 Burger Street. It falls under the Oudtshoorn Local Municipality, which Ratings Africa named most-improved municipality in the country between 2016 and 2020 in terms of financial sustainability in 2021.

General information Visit the Oudtshoorn & De Rust Tourism Office at 80 Voortrekker Street in Oudtshoorn, phone ☎ 044 279 2532 or send an email to ✉ enquiries@oudtshoorn.com. On its website, oudtshoorn.com, you can download a free brochure in PDF format containing details about all the latest events, eateries and accommodation options – click on the tab “More info” at the top, then on “Brochure”.

On derust.syce.co.za you’ll find information about the town and nearly all the businesses. The website run by the local heritage society is also well worth a visit: derustheritage.org.za

In De Rust itself, visit the information office at Karoo Rouge at 11 Schoeman Street, or keep abreast of happenings at [f](https://www.facebook.com/derusttourism) De Rust Tourism - South Africa

Eskom on the technical and financial side, has always had a passion for all things old. After he retired, he started a vintage and antiques shop with R100. He sold his finds on the Facebook page Mengelmoeskardoes.

Since the brick-and-mortar shop of the same name opened its doors in De Rust on 1 June 2020, Piet's turnover has more than doubled. "But money is not the most important thing here. I honestly believe people no longer understand the meaning of wealth. Here we sit at the gateway to heaven. My wife Suzette and I are great nature enthusiasts, and after nearly three years here I know the city will never see us again. In summer, after closing time, you just have to pack a bottle of light Cape wine and drive into the mountains – 10 minutes later, you're in heaven."

HEAVEN OR PARADISE also happen to be among the first words that come up when you enter the property belonging to one of De Rust's oldest residents, Marietjie Beukman. Soan and Niekie told *Platteland* that Soan's mother and Marietjie knew each other as children, and that Marietjie's home is a surprising time warp that takes you back to a former era. Marietjie, however, wanted nothing to do with curious journalists and cameras specifically. It took Soan three days of pleading (and a few avocados from their tree!) before she would talk to us.

Two of the three houses on her property are ancient – one of these cob houses was reportedly built by two women while the men were fighting in the Anglo-Boer War.

At age 85, Marietjie's eyes and brain are exceptionally sharp and she talks non-stop as she and her dog Snowy guide us through the garden full of succulents and chickens. Orchids bloom profusely in the shelter of a tree and some shade netting.

"This ground was rock upon rock upon rock and clay; it took back-breaking work with a pickaxe and a lot of compost to get it to this point," she says. She works here every day, and when the mood strikes her she uses paint and a paintbrush to turn pieces of scrap wood and tin or papier-maché creations into works of art, many with phrases from Arikaans songs or poems. "You let it rest for a while, you observe it, sometimes you throw it on the floor and wait until it tells you what it wants to be," says Marietjie, gesturing at a piece of wood weathering against a wall. She shakes her head before the veiled hint has even been verbalised: "Don't be crazy. It's not for sale. Forget it."

She was 5 when her father died and she and her mother moved

from Prince Albert to De Rust in 1943, Marietjie says. "But that De Rust, the original De Rust, is not the one of today. There was veld everywhere, just veld, where we were free to play, because there weren't really cars in town in those days, and we had feet for walking!"

In 1994, after a career as a teacher and two children, Marietjie returned. "But by then it was no longer the De Rust I'd known. And now you want to know how it's changed over the past 30 years. I don't know how to answer you... I just know that it has changed; a town is dynamic, after all.

"Now I'm 85 – it's just a date but I don't want to be 85, because I still don't feel 85. But I know I'll go one day and De Rust will continue without me. That's why one should always look at the whole picture, and not just directly in front of you."



ABOVE It is an adventure to take a walk through the succulent garden that Marietjie Beukman established in rocky, heavy clay soil beneath a stand of gum trees. There are three buildings on the property, and she takes turns sleeping in them as the mood takes her.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT We noticed this beautiful portrait of Marietjie, who is camera-shy, in a loose plastic folder in her studio; in the background on the floor are some of her artworks. This is one of two historical houses on the property that Marietjie inherited from her late mother. Marietjie's hands are clearly used to the soil and the sun – at the age of 85, her skin does not seem old so much as well lived-in. The door to the building where she works and sometimes sleeps is decorated with pieces of art and found objects. "Art! What do you mean? I'm simply passing the time with things that I find beautiful."



Meet the people

Kathryn Eybers and Ross Dwyer

Owners of the permaculture farm Numbi Valley

When Ross Dwyer and Kathryn Eybers bought a barren patch of land outside De Rust 18 years ago, trodden by ostriches that had been kept in camps, the locals thought they weren't of sound mind if they believed they could farm there, and off the grid to boot.

Today, 60 different fruit trees grow on Numbi Valley – that's the name of the farm, and not a true valley (*numbi* means "breasts", in reference to the shape of the koppies). The steep circular beds in their permaculture garden – complete with a rotating team of chickens that do all the aerating and fertilising – contain a wealth of vegetable varieties that they sell in weekly vegetable boxes and share with the guests who rent the two self-catering cottages on the farm. They also have beehives and offer permaculture and cob-house building courses. Kathryn also works on demand as a yoga instructor and massage therapist.

In under nine months the two of them (with a little help from friends at times) built a wonderful temperature-controlled cob house with a floor of loose shale that will weather over time. It cost them R30 000 and the only technology they used was a cordless 12V drill and a chainsaw. *Platteland* plans to visit again soon and will definitely rent this property, which has an egg-shaped swimming pool.

"In the beginning we had to make do without an income for a long time, and

we had to learn how to work creatively with things we picked up," Ross says.

"Today, we live very comfortably – we really have everything we want and need – but we are certainly not big consumers. Although we aren't vegetarians, we do mainly eat plants because we grow them ourselves. From time to time we trade vegetables for

dairy or good meat, and sometimes one does have to exchange cash for coffee or whisky..." He laughs.

"But we've found our rhythm for living in harmony with this earth," Kath says.

Contact numbivalley.webs.com

numbivalley@gmail.com

WhatsApp 072 191 8672 to book a permaculture tour or accommodation.



ABOVE Ross and Kath stand in front of a large fig tree in the food garden that they established on their farm Numbi Valley 18 years ago. **LEFT** The bedroom in the new cob cottage – just look at the floor covering of loose shale! **FAR LEFT** They're constantly sowing new seed to promote diversity in the garden.



Karin Theron and Gina Muller

Managers: De Rust Services

Karin Theron's brother Deon and his South African life partner Eli have long lived in New York, where they own a therapeutic massage studio called Bodywork4You. "But," she says, "he is almost more active than I am on all the local WhatsApp groups, and he handles the accommodation bookings from there."

The two fitness devotees plan to retire to the South African platteland in a few years' time, which is why they wanted to invest in a property that they could renovate, furnish and rent out. In 2020 they bought an old house, now known as Rus op De Rust, and decided to persuade Karin, who owned a luxury backpacker's in Oudtshoorn at that stage, to oversee the task of building, restoration and painting.

"I was crazy about De Rust right away, especially the people and the stress-free lifestyle here. But as Deon and Eli's house progressed, I started wondering what I'd do once I'd completed the job. I'd heard there was once a laundromat in the town, so we decided to start one using only biodegradable detergents. Your washing is returned to you in a linen bag or wrapped in brown paper."

As things became busier, Gina Muller, a friend of Karin's from Oudtshoorn, joined her in running the business. It's now known as De Rust Services and their offering includes laundry; the managing and cleaning of rental accommodation (such as 38 Schoeman Street, where *Platteland* stayed); looking after houses and pets; renting out bicycles by the hour for exploring the area; taking dogs for walks; gardening services for smaller gardens; and washing and cleaning of cars. They also sell a range of small items for which driving all the way to Oudtshoorn would be annoying – from tubes of glue and batteries for key fobs to brooms and buckets. There's even a gift shop at the laundromat.

"I never would have thought a laundromat could be so easy and stress-free to run. Along with all the other services, this means we actually enjoy being available to people 24 hours a day. That's how it goes in a place where you can breathe deeply."

Contact De Rust Services 072 188 7270 (Karin) 082 324 8766 (Gina)

Jan Bezuidenhout

Tourism assistant and crime-prevention officer

Jan Bezuidenhout, who was born and bred in De Rust, became involved in crime prevention in the town in 2001. "These days, people are naming their children these strange animal names, but fortunately my father only gave me one: Jan. We first lived right down there in the former location, but sometime just before '94 we moved up to Blomnek."

For years, Jan worked as general assistant and cleaner at the high-school hostel, and then at the primary school. Since retiring in 2014, he has been patrolling the main street in De Rust as one of the town's tourism assistants. They keep a watchful eye over vehicles and shield tourists from beggars, the inebriated and "flower sellers".

"We struggle terribly," Jan says, "because our country and the economy are going through a difficult period, and there are hard times ahead. There's a problem here with tik, mandrax and alcohol abuse. Many people waste their AllPay money on these things and then commit crimes to get money for food or more drugs. There are even people who beg for food, then sell it for tik money. But I say to them: "No, man, no, go find yourself a job and leave alone the visitors who spend money in the town."



Meet the people

Chris Cronjé

Resident, former train driver and jack of all trades

The geraniums are blooming like there's no tomorrow at the topsy-turvy house on the main road where Chris Cronjé lives with his basset Tiny. The owner of the house is muttering away as he picks up cigarette butts outside on the pavement.

"Two bricklayers and I built this house in 12 days and I've lived here for 25 years... How long ago did I retire from the railways?" He adds that he grew up and attended school in Blanco in George, then completed his "driving degree" at Noupoot, after which he worked as a train driver in Pretoria for 35 years. But each year when he and his late wife Nellie drove down to the seaside, she would say that she wanted to live here one day.

After he retired, the two of them ran the shop next to a "coffee-and-tea-and-sandwich-type-of-place" Die Kraaltjie, which used to belong to Gert Olivier.

But Chris has been living alone for 10 years now, never turns the geyser on, and does "anything, cars too; I work on anything". At the age of 78 he has "never ever" touched a drop of alcohol. "Never done Communion. No cigarettes or cigars. I told my father I would never do it; I have no interest. And let me tell you, I think I'm the happiest person in the town. I bother no one. I ask for nothing



from anyone and I don't owe anybody anything. For the past 25 years I've got to know most people by sight, but I don't go visiting and I don't gossip. I am satisfied, I have had a good life and I've reached a good age."

And his hand?

"I lost my hand on 26 July 1972 at 15:00 in the afternoon. Instantly

amputated between two train carriages. It was actually worse when I broke three vertebrae in 1973.

"But you know, if you've lived without a hand for 50 years, you don't need it anymore. I'm fast with this stump and I'm warning you now: there's not a hand in the land that comes anywhere close to these two!"



Wendy Erasmus

Resident and bookworm

On Tuesday morning, after her yoga class, Wendy ran into the courtyard at Mengelmoeskardoes, where a Little Free Library has been installed. If you find a book here that you'd like to read, you may take it free of charge, give it to someone else or return it. Nothing is ever sold.

She has lived here for two-and-a-half years and knows the town well – she used to visit family here every year between 2009 and 2019.

"It is endlessly interesting to meet others who have moved here from Pretoria, Cape Town, KwaZulu-Natal or Johannesburg – lots of creative, talented, bright people, plus some very alternative souls to make life colourful. We are never bored!"

Philip and Carol Jeal

Owners of Cape Teal Soaps

In 2010, the cheerful Jeals swapped Johannesburg for a quieter life in the Cape, where Carol was offered a post as a maths and computer teacher at Redhill Private School. Philip, who worked as a trader and broker, was totally burnt out and, on top of it, had just lost his job. He was in his late forties, "but not yet ready to be a flowerpot". He says this just after sharing the story of what he calls "purely a business decision", taken in 1989, to amputate the leg he had injured during his national service. After two years of operations and transplants and constant pain, life was no longer a joy. "I can't tell you how relieved I was to wake up and find the leg gone."

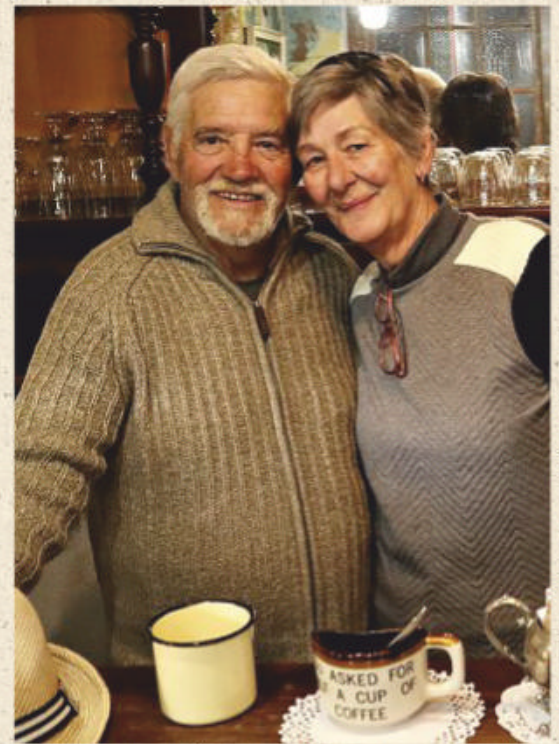
In the Cape, Carol, who is allergic to commercial soap, started experimenting with making her own soap. She was inspired by practical tips from the university of YouTube and members of the local soapmaking community who were eager to share their knowledge. She says she was actually looking for a small business opportunity that would keep Philip busy, and so Cape Teal Soaps was born in 2016. They started out very small and for a long time gave soap away free of charge, but over time at markets they built up a steady clientele of vegans who don't use soap made with animal fat.

However, eventually the traffic and busyness in the Cape became too much for the Jeals and they decided to move to a smaller town. They considered Montagu and Heidelberg, and then Carol's sister in Mossel Bay suggested that they pop in at De Rust. They rented a cottage on De Rustica Olive Estate for a few months, and nine months before Covid struck they bought a renovated house, where Cape Teal Soaps now manufactures a large variety of soaps, along with a shampoo bar, and a facial spray using fresh water from the Swartberg.

"There's a bunch of weird people in De Rust," Carol says, "so we fit in well."

"Ag, you know, if you had to complain, you'd probably say there's town politics," Philip adds, "but even that's nothing compared with the mosquitoes!"

Contact capetealsoaps.co.za  Cape Teal Soaps



Charles and Hannah Ferreira

Owners of Tolbos Trading

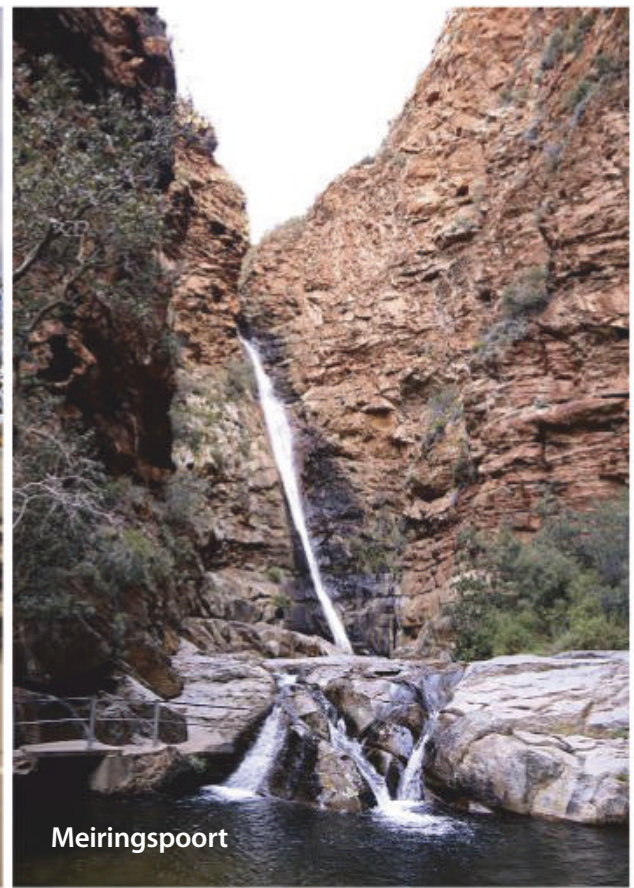
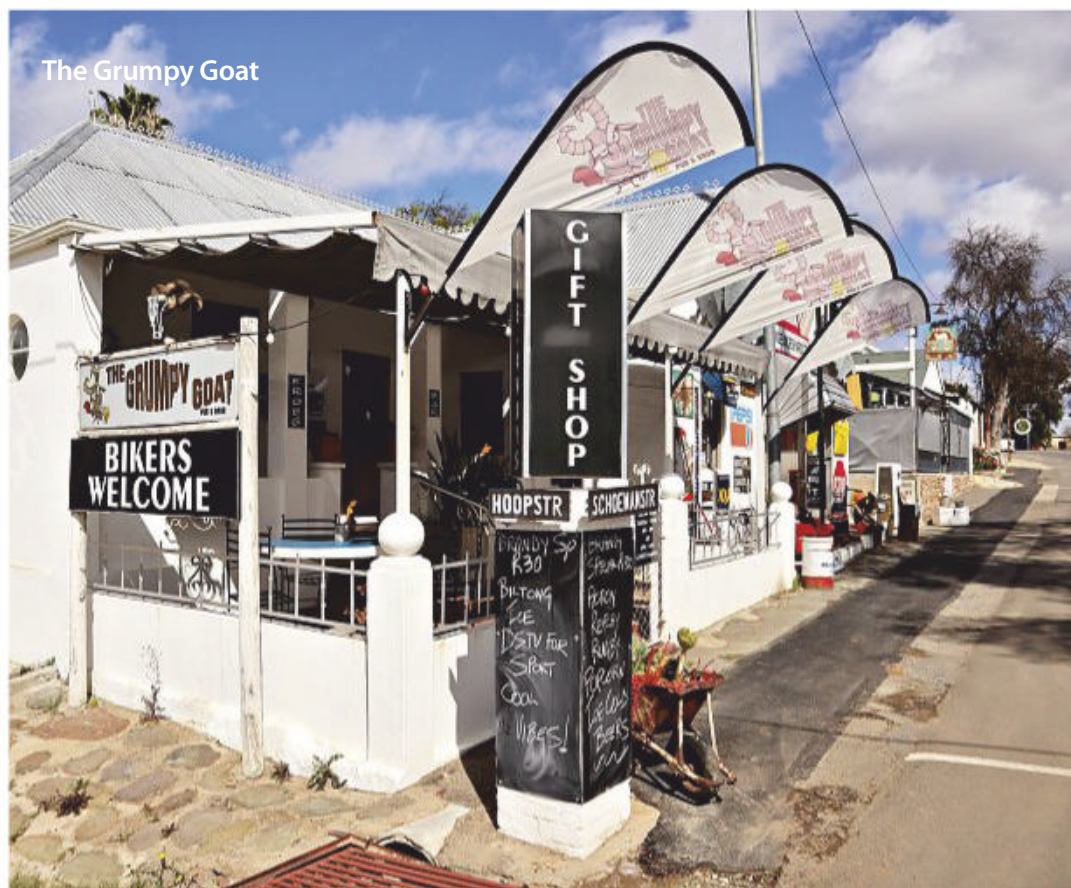
Hannah and Charles Ferreira are fun-loving people who laugh often, even when they're telling you that they were "pioneers" who met 18 years ago on a dating site, or how Hannah only learnt to ride a motorbike at the age of 57 and took a tumble. But over the more than eight years and 90 000 km they spent traversing South Africa on their iron steeds, somehow De Rust was never on their route. Charles was working for business magnate Patrice Motsepe, officially as portfolio manager of finances and salaries for his soccer team Mamelodi Sundowns, although he also once had to act as general manager.

In 2018, after having looked elsewhere first, they bought Tolbos Trading on the main road, where the bakery-cum-restaurant Ant Dora's Spens used to be. "Now, we are the only 'adult shop' in De Rust, and our top sellers remain glasses, crutches and false teeth," they joke.

Although the couple really came here to retire, running the bistro and function venue keeps them busy, and then there are the wonderful passes and gravel roads in the area to explore. "De Rust is a great town with great people. It's a place where you can be quiet or sociable, as long as you are just yourself."

Contact  Tolbos Trading

 082 859 0730



Visitor information

PLAY AND SHOP

Marvel at the scenery

De Rust lies between the majestic Swartberg and the Kammanassie Mountains. The entrance to **Meiringspoort** is only 2 km away. This 25 km mountain pass traverses the Groot River 25 times, connects the Little Karoo with the Great Karoo, and forms part of Swartberg Nature Reserve, a World Heritage Site. (Warning: Nobody would blame you for admiring the jaw-dropping scenery, but rather keep your eyes on the road – there are many twists and turns, and trucks too.) Pull over and walk to the waterfall (about 12 km from De Rust) and visit the info centre. The ablution and other facilities at the five stops in Meiringspoort are excellent and well maintained, but it's always shocking to see how many South Africans still litter wherever they go.

If you're in the area for a few days and have never travelled this route, now's the time to explore **Swartberg Pass** and, if possible, the road to **Gamkaskloof/Die Hel**. You won't regret it.

Also acquaint yourself with **De Rust Koppie**, which from a distance might seem no different from any other whippersnapper hill in the Karoo. An astonishing collection of 300 plant species makes it truly unique. Some of

these, such as the small blue iris (*Moraea regalis*) and the *Haworthia bayeri* succulent are endemic to this koppie – meaning they grow nowhere else on earth. Download the brochure "Guide for De Rust Koppie" at derustheritage.org.za/data/documents/Brochure-Guide-for-De-Rust-Koppie-.pdf

Alternatively, explore the mountains on **Doornkraal** on horseback. Visit **Klein Karoo Horse Adventures** ☎ 082 895 5009.

View the historical houses

De Rust has an abundance of attractive restored heritage buildings. As part of the Heritage Society's upliftment project, you can either book a village walking tour, or download the map and basic information in PDF format and guide yourself. (Otherwise hire a bicycle or a tandem bicycle at **De Rust Bike Rentals** (f De Rust Bike Rentals ☎ 072 188 7270.) Visit the website derustheritage.org.za, click on "**De Rust Heritage Walk**" at the top and then, at the bottom of the page, on "the map" and "illustrated information" (both underlined and in blue).

Surrender to nostalgia

At his shop **Mengelmoeskardoes** on the corner of Schoeman Street and Hoop Avenue, Piet Smit sells old

telephones, tins, irons, chamber pots, gas stoves, scales, shoe trees, wash basins and jugs, lanterns, typewriters, cassette players, first-aid kits, enamel- and earthenware, cups and saucers, primus stoves (still in their original packaging!), slide projectors, cameras, LPs, copperware... the sorts of things you probably last saw as a child or in a museum. The shop is open from 09:00 to 17:00 daily (except for most Wednesdays). (f Mengelmoeskardoes ☎ 082 515 0408

Explore the other shops

At Loraine Burger's **Karoo Rouge** on Schoeman Street (f Vellies Karoo Rouge 📧 loraineburger@hotmail.com ☎ 082 455 5487 or 082 936 0855), you'll find vellies in a range of colours, homeware, De Rustica olive oil, Simply Bee products, gifts, jewellery, biscuits, coffee and cake.

Freda Schoeman sells home-made goodies like sauces, syrups, biscuits and rusks, as well as table linen, scatter cushions, enamelware and second-hand glassware at her shop **Mooi Karoo** (f Mooikaroo ☎ 083 305 9974), which forms part of the building that also includes Pluim and the Schoeman Gallery. Beautiful bonsai trees by Desvonde Slinger are for sale here too. >

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Niekie Eksteen and Soan Jacobs have a more compact but equally bustling establishment called **Village Trading Post/Coffee on the Run** (f Village Trading Post, De Rust ☎ 044 241 2110) at the Caltex garage as you drive into the town from Oudtshoorn. They describe it as a coffee shop and restaurant with a twist. They sell good Lavazza coffee, pastries, sandwiches and snacks, as well as things for the home, pantry and garden, including Mungo towels, Cape Teal soap, crystalware, plants, pots, shoes, seed, olive oil, preserves and confectionery.

If you'd like to buy wines from the area – or jams, dried fruit, honey, olive oil and cheeses – look no further than Gert Olivier's **Route 62 Wine Shop** at 2 Schoeman Street.

Admire or buy art

De Rust is both home and place of work for several artists such as Diane McLean and Hermann Niebuhr, both of whom participated in De Rust Open Studios on Heritage Day weekend in September. Artists open their studios to the public for this annual event.

You'll find more than art in lovely galleries such as Andries Schoeman's **Schoeman Gallery** (f Schoeman Gallery ☎ 082 655 7085), where work from the owner's personal collection is exhibited, along with creations by both up-and-coming and established artists.

The Art Café (☎ 076 182 1243), which looks more like a pizza joint from outside (and where you can indeed order pizza and breakfast), sells art too, as does **ArtBeat** (f ArtBeat), which stocks local paintings, quilting, knitting and stained-glass work, jewellery, candles, rusks, biscuits and preserves.

Also take a look at works from the late Roy Shamby's collection at the **Cape Wine Shop** and **Hotel De Rust**.

Go to market

De Rust Country Market takes place on the first Saturday of every month on the Sunset Caravan Park premises on Schoeman Street. Here, you'll find organic vegetables, bread, coffee, pancakes and smoked bacon, as well as crafts, clothing, books and some of De Rustica's lovely olive oil for sale.

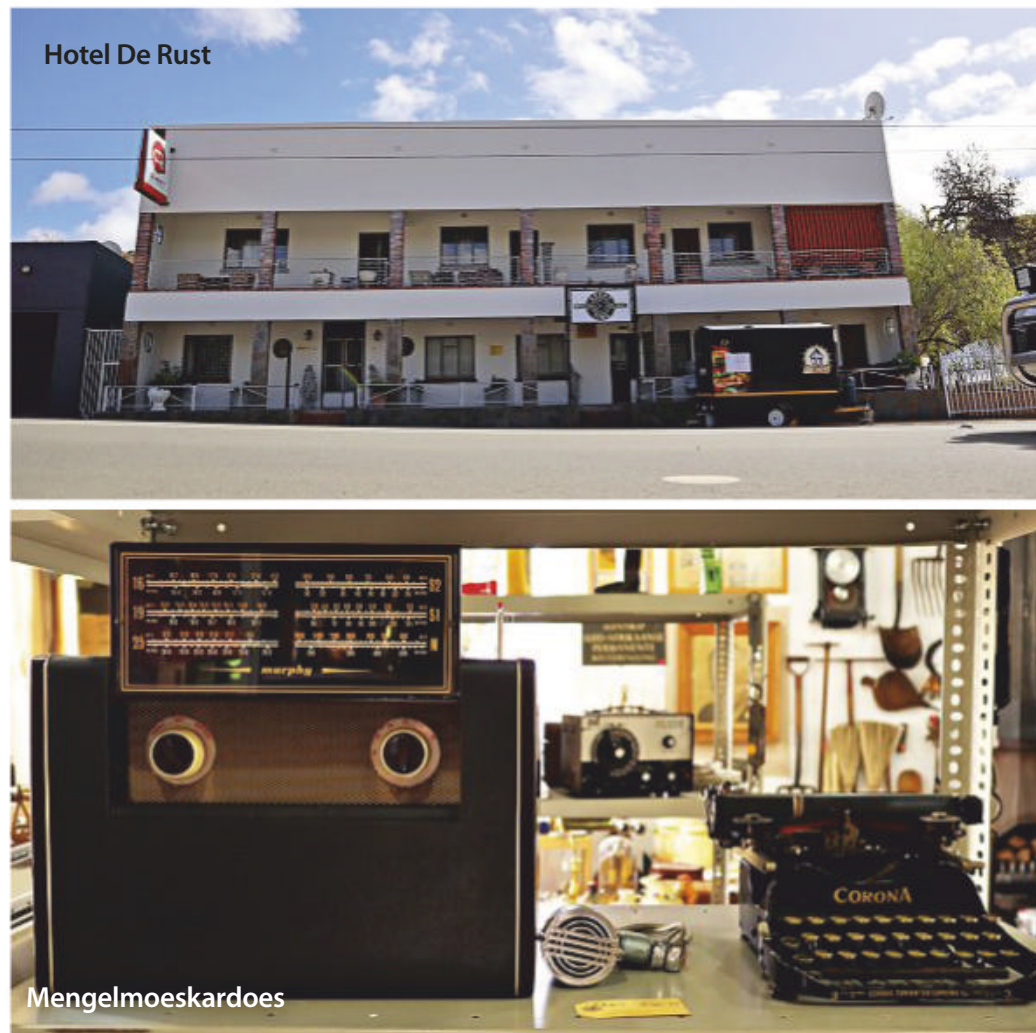
f De Rust Country Market

Do a pub crawl

You can now officially enjoy some pub crawling in De Rust – from point A to point B – on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays between 16:00 and 22:00 (when **Hotel De Rust's About Time Bar** is open). The hotel opened its doors in 1953 (with a bottle store and a fuel station) but it was closed for the past three decades – until Pretoria residents Werner and Bernadette Alberts brought it back from the dead this past winter. Artworks by former owner Roy Shamby can be viewed in the hotel, and the bar will no doubt transport you to another era.

The only other stop on your pub crawl is Tim and Aly(son) Jones's cosy **The Grumpy Goat** at 29 Schoeman Street, where you're guaranteed to get to know all the lovely locals and their stories. (Don't miss Alyson's chilli sauce... You will receive a free roll of toilet paper with each bottle!). It's closed on Mondays and some Sundays (depending on the holiday season).

f Hotel De Rust f The Grumpy Goat Pub De Rust Klein Karoo f The Grumpy Goat Pub and Grub ☎ 082 660 1261 >





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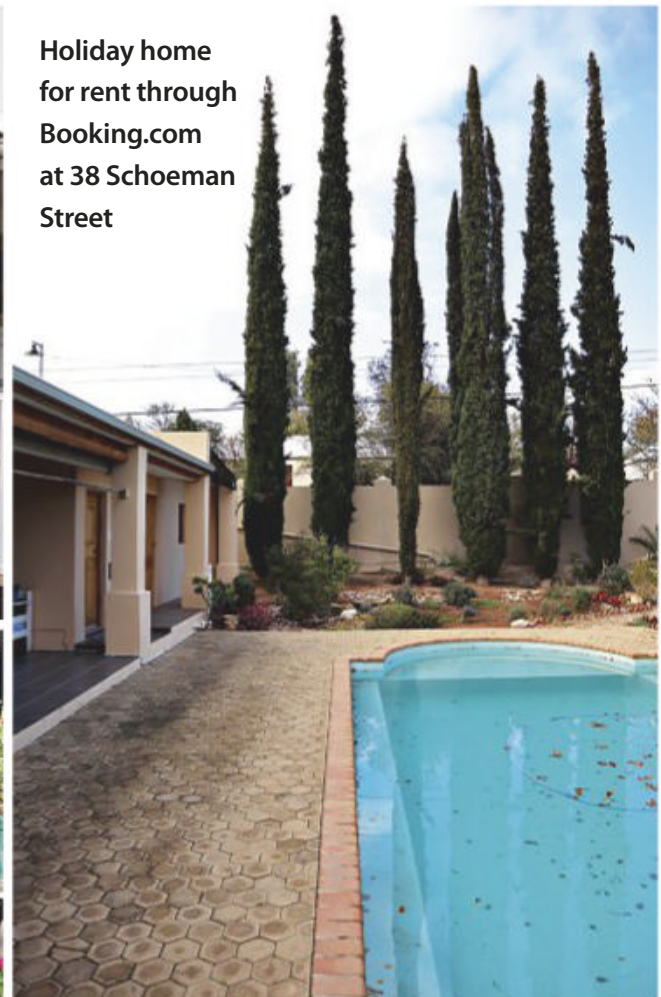
Pluim Eatery



Tolbos Trading



Village Trading Post



Holiday home for rent through Booking.com at 38 Schoeman Street

EAT OUT

Platteland has noticed this phenomenon in many other towns that are even more dependent on the money of visitors, and where, at the same time, increasing numbers of new *inkommers* are arriving with their cash, dreams and plans: for its size, there are far too many eateries in De Rust to be sustainable over the long term.

At least twice a day, *Platteland* bought coffee at the **Village Trading Post/ Coffee on the Run**.

Going by the registration numbers outside, both locals and travellers gather on the stoep of **Ray's Coffee Shop** (f Ray's Coffee Shop, De Rust ☎ 071 342 9271) on the left-hand side of Schoeman Street as you come into town from Meiringspoort. The menu offers breakfast, coffee and cake, sandwiches, burgers and pies – and there's free Wi-Fi.

At **Tolbos Trading** (f Tolbos Trading ☎ 082 859 0730) on the right-hand side of Schoeman Street as you arrive in town from Oudtshoorn, there will generally be a wholesome, affordable daily meal available (such as soup, boerewors rolls, oxtail stew or bobotie

and yellow rice), pancakes, milk tart, rusks and biscuits, candles, jam and other preserves, knitting work and trinkets. You'll know they're open if the notice board is standing on the pavement outside – probably all week except for Tuesdays!

Unfortunately, while *Platteland* was in town, **Spekbos Restaurant @ Rooi Donkie** (☎ 078 697 6011) was closed. And they were busy with renovations at **Café Rust** (f Cafe Rust ☎ 079 432 7606), which also sells gifts and second-hand books.

Pluim Eatery and Coffee

This lovely eatery, belonging to Andries Schoeman and his fiancé Jan Berand Badenhorst, opened its doors in December 2021. It is currently open from Wednesdays to Saturdays (08:30 tot 15:30) and on Sundays for lunch only. The menu comprises a good variety of flavourful dishes dictated by the seasons, all beautifully presented – foodies would call it artisan fare. The chef, Ilze Beyers, hails from De Rust and is vegan, which means there are great options for those who don't eat meat (but meat lovers needn't

stress – we can attest to the fact that, as you'd expect from a professional chef, she knows how to cook meat). Sunday lunches are always themed – sometimes traditional and nostalgic, at other times inspired by the cuisine of a particular country. f Pluim Eatery and Coffee @ pluim_eatery_coffee ☎ 082 655 7085

STAY OVER

There are plenty of overnight and holiday accommodation places for rent in and around the town – most are listed on booking.com, travelground.co.za and safarinow.com.

Platteland had the lovely self-catering house **Rus in De Rust** (rusinderust.com) in mind but stayed at **38 Schoeman Street**, a spacious three-bedroom house with a swimming pool, also managed and serviced by De Rust Services.

Next time we're in the area, we will definitely stay over at the lovely cob house that Ross and Kath have built at **Numbi Valley** permaculture farm (numbivalley.webs.com ☎ 072 191 8672). P

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FOR THE LOVE OF THE LAND



Postcards to Oom Jan Poortjie

Oom Jan van Niekerk's life was divided according to the dry and the wet years on his Bushmanland farm Poortjie. And the final chapter was an eight-year drought. Oom Jan didn't get to experience the wonderful summer of 2021/2022, so **Willem van der Berg** photographed it for him.



Dear Oom Jan, André Nel farms in the heart of Bushmanland. He ploughed the shape of a heart on a small pan on his farm – you can see it on Google Earth! But here in the present that heart is under water. How amazing is that? André and I can't stop taking photos.

Oom Jan, this guy, Uli Wagener, has never been to Bushmanland before. He was under the impression it's a desert; he cannot believe it can look like this. I regret having to tell him it seldom looks like this. We send greetings from the veld around Klein Pella.



One August afternoon in 2021, I sat on my haunches at Oom Jan van Niekerk's grave. He was interred in the red sand below me. Beneath the skin of Bushmanland, the only piece of earth he really knew and truly loved. On top of the sand was one of Poortjie's ironstone rocks.

Oom Jan and Poortjie were one. People always connected his name with that of the farm; he was known as Jan Poortjie.

The proteas on his grave had dried out long ago. A pink ribbon stirred in the wind. At the house,

the wheel of the Gearing windmill was facing west. A dead wind, Oom Jan would have said.

The sun started to climb down the jackal-proof fencing around the cemetery, turning into gold the dirt churned up by dogs playing. I was about to feel sad, but then I recalled Oom Jan's words after our first meeting, almost 10 years before.

"Don't feel sorry for me, Boeta. The people of this part of the world must be given hell."

Mercy is indeed a rarity here, and dry, hot days are plentiful. Only once your life is over, will there be relief.

"We're a rough lot here in Bushmanland, Boeta," Oom Jan

said. "But we're all going straight to heaven. We suffer enough so there's no need to punish us any further."

WHEN I GOT LOST IN THE vast drabness south of Pofadder in the spring of 2011 and ended up at the Poortjie farmhouse, Oom Jan immediately invited me inside and mixed some Oros. In the living room, an oxygen cylinder helped Tannie Cora to breathe. A rare lung disease choked the air from her lungs. But never her spirit, or her patience or her stories.

The veld looks dry, I said to them.

No, Boeta, Oom Jan replied, it's still fine. "The guys who say it's dry now have never really had to deal



with drought. One year, the droplets passed us over for 10 years.”

“Not one year, one time,” Tannie Cora said.

When it was that dry – back in the Seventies – she found work in Pofadder to supplement their income. Their eldest son, also Jan, who was attending primary school and had been staying in the hostel, could then move in with Tannie Cora because she lived in town during the week.

“One evening he asked me for how much longer I’d be living in town. I said as long as the drought lasted. And that night he prayed, ‘Oh Lord, please let it remain dry until I’ve finished school.’”

And it did. It was only in Jan Jr’s matric year that enough rain fell again at Poortjie.

“That boy didn’t know what he was asking for,” Oom Jan said, his eyes shut tightly, his head shaking. As though 10 years’ worth of dead sheep were standing in front of him again, asking to be fed.

Before I got on my motorbike, Oom Jan said: “Boeta, don’t fall. If you fall on this road, someone might only find you next week. Or maybe not at all.”

Then he held my hand tightly and asked, “Please come to visit us again.”

When I returned to Poortjie two years later, Oom Jan walked with >

ABOVE Oom Jan, in the wake of the rain came a lot of locusts. But also orb-web spiders. I think for the sake of the spiders you wouldn’t have sprayed a pesticide. What do you think?

ABOVE LEFT Oom Jan, I’m visiting your neighbours, the Vissers tonight. The full moon is putting on a real show as the bushman grass reflects its light back to it. More rain is forecast for tomorrow.

INSET ABOVE Dear Oom Jan, I wonder what we would have talked about if you could have seen this veld. Because we nearly always talked about the drought. Greetings from bakkies everywhere in Bushmanland.



On Ockie van Schalkwyk’s farm, only a few months ago there was nothing here, he says, nothing, only red soil. And look at it now: it’s the most beautiful veld anywhere in the country. We should have bet on it, Oom Jan.

the aid of a cane. Tannie Cora had gone to heaven. The veld looked sad; it missed Tannie Cora and the rain. Nobody knew it yet, but that was the first year of a drought that would only let up once numerous sheep and Oom Jan could no longer feel the rays of the sun.

IN 2020, REPORTS OF RAIN in the scorched Northern Cape began doing the rounds on social media. I went to see it for myself and found some evidence of scattered showers in a few places in the Karoo and the Kalahari. But Bushmanland remained a scabby sheep. Bare and in pain. And so close to death that vultures, which never used to occur in the area, circled in the sky. “The rain that has fallen in our area isn’t enough to save one person’s life, Boeta,” Oom

Jan said. “This little green strip that runs past us is so small you can tuck it in your pocket.”

The Isuzu was loaded with feed and Oom Jan asked me to drive; his legs were too weak. We talked about many things, but mostly about drought. This was what he knew best. According to the rainfall records he kept on the farm for 50 years, the previous six years had been the driest yet. Of these, 2017 (0mm–11 mm), 2019 (0mm–35 mm) and 2020 (0mm–35 mm) had been the worst. In the 2000s he also started documenting the temperature daily, and noted that it had been getting warmer. The summer of 2019/2020 was particularly hot. For an entire week in January the temperature was in the high 40s, and in February and March the mercury reached that high. >



Dear Oom Jan, I don't think
Bushmanland has ever had as much
grass and as many rainbows as I've seen
this summer. I wish you could see it too
and tell me if I'm right. Greetings from
many muddy roads.



FOR THE LOVE OF THE LAND

During the summer of 2021/2022, large parts of Bushmanland had two to three times their average rainfall for the season – in fact, they had more rain than the total for the previous eight years. Your rainfall records are incomplete without these figures, Oom Jan. Greetings from Makkiesplaas.



“This part of the world is dry; we know that. But we’re not used to this kind of heat. It really burns the veld until nothing is left. I don’t think I’ve ever seen it this bare. And I was born here on the farm; I know it well,” Oom Jan said.

There were little lambs among several of his flocks. The sight of them troubled Oom Jan.

“As cute as they look now, you won’t believe what a headache they can be. Hell, Boeta, it’s going to be a devil of a job to raise them.”

We reached the strip of land where Poortjie’s only green grass shoots were waving in the breeze like sparse hairs on a head.

“It’s so meagre that the sheep just sniff at it. But if 2 inches of rain were to fall here now and you returned in two weeks’ time, you’d think you were dreaming. Then it would be the best and most

beautiful veld in the entire country. What do you think, Boeta, do you want to bet on it?”

Oom Jan’s eyes were screwed up to keep the dead wind and murderous sun out of his head for a few seconds. He wanted to see the veld at its most beautiful for a moment, feel thick tufts of grass brushing his legs, the soft seed between his fingers.

“Gambling. That’s what we’re doing here. Who knows whether we’ll get decent rain at all over the next five years? If it doesn’t rain, we will lose. If it rains next year, we’ll win a little something back. But we don’t know. The smart guys shouldn’t come and tell me we just have to improve our planning. That quiver tree knows better than any human when the rain will come. And there it stands. Also waiting. Also hoping.”

HOW I WISHED Oom Jan could see the bushman grass rippling in waves again. A sparkling white sea across Poortjie. Fat Dorpers bobbing around in it. But he left suddenly one night in the dry winter of 2021.

His body was still there in Bushmanland but everything else had vanished: the stories, the distinct manner of speaking that would never be heard again, the eyes that seemed to be searching for rain or twinkling with a joke.

Perhaps he and the quiver tree knew what was coming and he set off to join Tannie Cora. So that, together, they could watch the clouds elbow one another out of the way to be the first ones to rain down over Poortjie. All summer long. Until it became the best and most beautiful veld in the entire country. **P**



You were right, Oom Jan, the quiver trees know best. They were scrawny but patient. Now, having quenched their thirst, they are showing their gratitude. Greetings from Goodhouse and surrounds.



INSET I sneaked this photo of the camera-shy Oom Jan and farm worker Arno Visagie in May 2020, deep into the drought and in the middle of Level 2 lockdown. Oom Jan was convinced the virus would die of hunger if it ever made it to Bushmanland. It was the last time I saw him.

Dear Oom Jan,
This is my last postcard. I will always think of you when I drive on Bushmanland's roads, whether the sun is beating down on the dry earth or a thunderstorm is building. I hope that heaven has excellent lamb chops. And that the rain is abundant.
Your friend,
Willem





Elana Bruwer, the woman behind the Elana's product range, stands in front of the factory on their family farm Drie Eike near Robertson.

The FAIRY GODMOTHER of ugly food

On Drie Eike fruit farm on the outskirts of Robertson, Elana Bruwer transforms the Cinderellas of the Breede River Valley's fruit industry – the fruit with blemishes and bruises – into a range of home-made products that are now sold in seven provinces *and* online.

TEXT JOHAN VAN ZYL PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD



Between the Bruwers' home and the Elana's factory and factory shop is a shady part of the garden where they sell pancakes and coffee on Saturdays. Jaco not only grows some of the fruit Elana uses in her products but is also involved in other aspects of the business.



As an entrepreneur, placing your name on each and every jar and container and package that leaves your home industry requires limitless trust and pride – in yourself, in your products, in the people who work for you *and*, in Elana Bruwer's case, trust in the quality of the fruit that your husband and other farmers in the Breede River Valley cultivate.

But when you meet the pioneer behind Elana's in the flesh one Friday morning, she doesn't strike you as a brand but rather as something between a cheerful, hard-working farmer's wife and a funky

21st-century home-industry tannie. Although the Western Cape remains the most important distribution area for Elana's products, her preserves, jams, sauces, cordials, olives and pickled vegetables – all with a long shelf life – are now sold in shops in seven provinces.

She laughs when you say it seems Covid-19 did not have disastrous consequences for the business. "Well, Elana – that's me! – lost her senses of taste and smell during the first wave of Covid, and I still don't have them back. Although I'm aware of the basic sweet, salty, sour and bitter, I cannot taste anything. I can't smell when something is burning. But yes, Covid was indeed good for the business!"

To her surprise, the enterprise grew so fast during the pandemic that they couldn't keep up with the demand despite the two extra kitchens added to their home over the years. In November 2021, they moved into a new factory with office space and a storeroom close to their house.

"I made flow charts of everything that had to be in the space, bigger here, smaller there... And then I'm quite thrifty, so there's nothing new here; we bought everything through online auctions, and then we attached wheels to everything."

She pauses beside a mountain of boxes in the storeroom. "This part might look impressive but it's causing me stress: I now have >



ABOVE Annemarie Scheepers (left) from Robertson has worked at Elana's for two years, and Nicolene Maritz started working here as head chef during winter 2022. They don't use commercial pectin in any of Elana's jams and marmalades, only pectin found naturally in fruit.

TOP Natasha Plaatjies, who has an excellent memory for customers' preferences, runs the small factory shop. She also currently bakes all the rusks and makes the baking mixes.

INSET Chrystal Pieterse from Robertson demonstrates making extra-thin frozen pizza bases. In a jiffy she rolls out a small ball of dough with a rolling pin, tosses and stretches it using her hands, and then bakes it for 30 seconds on each side.

LEFT Marlene Carstens works in the office and handles the admin. The neat filing system with colour-coding to make it easier to differentiate between the records for Elana's, the farm and the Bruwers' rental properties is typical Elana, who says she has "a very organised brain".



BELOW A selection of products from the factory shop on the farm.

a larger factory that cost us a lot of money, and although I can increase production, the stock cannot remain in the storeroom; it should be in the shops. And I have to pay 12 people's salaries..."

The responsibility that comes with being a brand is daunting.

The first Consol jars

Elana says the idea of doing her own thing had always been at the back of her mind. When she traces the journey that has brought her to where she is now, she can see how growing up on a farm in the Herbertsdale district in the Southern Cape, her home-economics degree from Stellenbosch University, and the 16 years she spent working at the Langeberg canning plant in Ashton all combined to create the perfect training ground, shaping her

into someone who was able to take the great leap in 2006.

Also important, crucial in fact, was the fact that in 1996 she married a farmer, Jaco Bruwer. They produce peaches for canning, apricots and wine grapes on their 40ha farm Drie Eike. There are also old quince and fig trees on the farm, and Jaco has had to plant more figs to meet the demand for Elana's green fig preserve.

"Both Jaco and I come from families that have farmed for generations, and where the wonderful abundance of each season would end up in Consol jars on the pantry shelves. There were fruit trees on our farm, and my mom, Ria, the green-fig queen, and my grandmothers would make jams, chutneys, cordials and sweets.

"They were all actively involved in organising church bazaars and



in the activities of the VLV [the Vroue-Landbouvereniging] and the ACVV [Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging]. I used to say to my mother that when I stopped working at Langeberg I wanted to learn from her how to make all the VLV and bazaar recipes. When that first lesson finally took place in 2006, we spent an entire Sunday evening using a small knife each to scrape the fig skins. I thought to myself that all this scraping would never work in a commercial setup.” (Of course Elana has since adjusted and refined the recipe, and the green figs remain her top seller.)

After finishing her university studies, Elana joined Ashton Canning, which later merged with Langeberg Foods when it was taken over by Tiger Brands. She started out in the quality-control laboratory and later moved on to the production

department, where she eventually became head of the division that processed low-grade fruit for chutney and fruit rolls.

During this time, she and Jaco had two sons. Today, Roelou (22) and Muller (19), who was given Elana’s maiden name as a first name, are studying BSc Agricultural Economics and BCom, respectively.

“I used to work a two-thirds day, but when the company wanted to change it to a full-day post, I decided to resign and become a full-time mother and farmer’s wife,” Elana says. “But before you know it you’re involved in school activities and the parents’ association and the church and the bazaar, where they promptly say, ‘Oh, yes, you’re from the factories – you understand large-scale. Why don’t you take over the planning and the lists?’”

Elana laughs. “But later, when >

During lockdown, Jaco bought a shipping container and turned it into a factory shop for Elana’s on the farm. It opened in August 2020, and it’s been such a success that they had to add a second shipping container early in 2022. Some products are only available at the shop – mainly ones that spoil easily and require refrigeration.



Business lessons Elana has learnt

Elana bursts out laughing at the thought of sharing “business lessons” with other entrepreneurs. “I always thought if you’re an entrepreneur, that means no one taught you – you are mostly learning by trial and error!”

Jaco raises his hand, smiling mischievously. His contribution: “I think the most important lesson you learnt is to listen to your husband.”

Now she’s in stitches: “He’s not entirely wrong, you know!” she says, and during the course of the morning she does share a few pearls of wisdom:

• **MANAGING COSTS** This is crucial. We grow a lot of fruit ourselves and buy the rest from farmers in the area. Generally, a lot of good-quality fruit and vegetables are discarded because they’re blemished, misshapen or bruised – they call it “ugly food”. I can use them and buy them cheaply, and we have minimal transport costs.

• **CALCULATED RISKS (or listen to your husband)** Jaco is my husband, silent partner, financier and my greatest motivator and assistant. I’m the type of person who takes a long time to make a decision – I need to research everything first – whereas Jaco believes when it comes to business you have to think quickly and on your feet, think bigger and take calculated risks. It’s good to be able to count on the insight of someone whose approach differs from yours as a businessperson, but who still has your interests and those of the business at heart, at the same time encouraging you to get on with it.

• **PERSONAL CONTACT AND SERVICE** People enjoy talking. People like stories. People like personal contact. These days, this isn’t something I’ll willingly do unless it’s in a work context, and Saturdays are now our main socialising days. It’s great to spend that time between 09:00 and 13:00 moving from one table of customers and friends and townspeople to another.

• **TEST THE MARKET** Elana says Saturdays also give her the opportunity to test products. For example, in the factory shop you’ll find pickled beetroot and waterblommetjies in jars with yellow labels. These are new recipes she’s testing and for which she requests feedback.

• **MISTAKES ARE FINE** Some people are cross with themselves or others when errors are made, but wherever I’ve worked I’ve seen that mistakes are not the end of the world if you learn something from them.

• **TALK** Many mistakes or issues in the workplace, or mistakes that are made, are not personal, yet people take them that way. It’s important to talk about them – that’s why I have a staff meeting every morning to iron out matters and discuss the to-do list for the day. I also believe a feedback meeting is just as important as a planning meeting.

• **LISTS** I have a very organised brain; I like columns and lists and order. I honestly think a business cannot succeed without these in the madness of modern life.



ABOVE LEFT Mariana Damon, who grew up on the farm Drie Eike, has been working at Elana’s for 12 years. She is in charge of the storeroom and labelling.

ABOVE The storeroom has started to fill up since the staff moved operations to the new factory building.

LEFT The entrance to the Elana’s factory.

FAR LEFT Fruit in the cold room is ready to be made into a preserve.

they saw me it was a case of, 'Watch out; here comes Elana!', because I wanted to know all the details, like why they'd sold only 450 hamburgers if there had been 500 buns and 500 patties. What happened to the rest, and why was nothing documented?"

Despite her successful business and her busy life, Elana still finds the time to be involved in her community. *Platteland* saw a myriad of chocolate and hummingbird cakes when we walked into the two kitchens in the Bruwer home where Elana's products used to be made before the operation was moved to the new factory about a year ago.

"Oh, they're for the Robertson NG congregation's church bazaar tomorrow."

The first experiments

In the year that their youngest son Muller started at the agricultural

boarding school Oakdale in Riversdale, Elana found herself with time and energy to devote to an enterprise. Encouraged by a friend, she started to make chocolate truffles and fudge for a Christmas market. Green fig preserve soon followed, and then she began experimenting with various fruits that Jaco grows on the farm.

"But quality specs are non-negotiable when you put a product on the market... This is what it has to look like, this is the sugar content, these are the flaws... And every time I would go back to my mother and ask, What does the VLV say?"

The new factory, where strict records are kept, was in fact preceded by one of Jaco's pandemic plans: He ordered a shipping container from Cape Town to transform it into a "factory shop" for Elana's. He and their sons >

The coffee master

You will smell the presence of Kerwin Lakey and his coffee cart before you see them when you arrive at Drie Eike on a Saturday morning to shop, eat pancakes and chat to friends under the trees. He sells the same fragrant coffee here as he does at his Coffee Day Café at 2 Reitz Street in Robertson.

Kerwin always dreamt of owning his own business. After finishing school, he started working at Fego Caffé in Robertson, completed a two-week barista course and learnt everything from cleaning the coffee grinder to creating cappuccino foam art. But he says it was YouTube videos that helped him master the finer details. Since then Kerwin has won the Fego Barista Challenge twice, and in 2020 he placed third in the National Barista Competition. Initially he only ran his cart at Christmas markets but now his dream of owning a coffee shop has come true, and he is planning to expand.

✉ kerwinlakey@gmail.com

☎ 078 258 6084 📱 Coffee Day Café



COFFEE DAY CAFE



DRINKS

CAPPUCCINO

CAFÉ LATTE

CHAI LATTE

RED CAPPUCCINO

SINGLE

R24

R25

R25

DOUB

Kerwin Lakey owns Coffee Day Café in Reitz Street in Robertson. On Saturdays, however, you'll find him at Drie Eike, where he sells coffee for customers to enjoy with Elana's pancakes.



built shelves and roofing using the wood of a fallen gum tree. The small factory shop opened its doors in August 2020, initially only from Mondays to Fridays, but then Jaco started noticing how many cars were turning around at the gate on Saturdays.

"I think people feel the need to get out a little on Saturdays, but they arrive at the shop and then what? We started with one table in the shade of a tree in the garden and decided to begin selling pancakes with cinnamon sugar or milk tart filling on Saturdays, and roped in a good barista to make coffee.

"Now, the place is a hive of activity on a Saturday, with seating for 30–40 people. Many visitors have children, so a jungle gym followed, along with a sandpit and a cute little train that Jaco fashioned from blue plastic drums."

Since the opening of the factory shop, certain products have only been sold here, such as their wonderful thin pizza bases, rusks, pesto, tapenade and pastes.

"The longer I do this, the more I appreciate the importance of entrepreneurship in South Africa. We believe there is a future for our sons and plenty of incredible business opportunities in this country, as long as you're prepared to work hard. And those are the two things I've always been fairly good at: making plans and working hard."

Elana's factory shop on Drie Eike is open from Monday to Friday, from 09:00 to 17:00. Every Saturday, you can buy pancakes and coffee between 09:00 and 13:00, and sometimes they have a fun run/walk.

Contact elanas.co.za

info@elanas.co.za

☎ 023 626 4985 or 082 296 1155 

Elana's in a nutshell

TOP SELLERS Green fig preserve, onion marmalade and sweet-and-sour olives (particularly popular among people who usually don't eat olives, as they don't have even a hint of bitterness). At the end of the year, sales of their gift sets go through the roof.

PERSONAL FAVOURITES Green fig preserve,] sweet-and-sour peppers and tomato, cheese and basil dip. Elana makes the dip using her bottled tomato and garlic pasta sauce, her own fresh basil pesto and a creamy cheese. (The basil pesto and the tomato, cheese and basil dip are available at the factory shop only).

COMMERCIAL DISAPPOINTMENTS

"I made a plum cordial that did not sell and I took it off the shelf. Plum jam and plum sauce are not big sellers either. It seems South Africans are not that fond of plums."



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AGE-OLD CRAFT

Striking while the iron is HOT

Blacksmiths and bladesmiths, those keepers of the forge and masters of hot metal, are creating works of art in some unlikely dorpies across South Africa. **Alan Duggan** tracked down a few of them and came away with new respect for a craft dating back thousands of years.

It's not all about hot coals, anvils and big hammers. Today's blacksmiths and bladesmiths combine ancient traditions with a thorough knowledge of metallurgy and a rich assortment of artistic skills.



Heather and Kevin Harvey inspect a Bowie blade forged by Kevin. Their knives are tested in the field and don't leave the forge until both are satisfied.



If you're pushed for time, an interview with master bladesmith and serial adventurer Heather Harvey might go something like this:
Q: *Have you ever forged a sword in Damascus steel?*

A: Lots of times.

Q: *Worked in a circus?*

A: Yep.

Q: *Do you recall being bitten by a horse?*

A: Yes. No hard feelings.

Q: *Butted by a ram with a twisted sense of humour?*

A: Just once. We're still friends.

Q: *Be honest. Have you ever robbed a steam train from the back of a horse?*

A: Several times. And yes, I did it for the money.

Q: *Navigated in an international hot-air balloon competition?*

A: Of course.

When I first stumbled upon

Heaven Forge, I assumed the name was a misprint. Not so, say owners Heather and Kevin Harvey; it's simply an amalgam of their first names.

The talented duo moved from Johannesburg to the small town of Belfast in Mpumalanga 21 years ago after a successful but "exhausting" sojourn at Johannesburg's Gold Reef City, where they helped to entertain more than 1 million visitors a year with blacksmithing demonstrations.

"We had visited Belfast over the years and enjoyed its brilliant fly-fishing and cool climate, which is ideal when you work with fire every day," Heather says. "We wanted to move to a quiet country town where we could keep our horses and combine our workshops."

So that's exactly what they did.

"It has been a wonderful experience. To leave the stress

of city life for the tranquillity of country living was the best decision we've ever made. Our creativity and productivity have increased tenfold, and having my horses with me all the time has made my life complete. I'm sure even the horses are glad to be out of the city."

HEATHER'S BACK STORY is the stuff of legend. "I have always loved horses, so at a very early age I decided to become a farrier, much to my mother's horror. By the time I finished school I was already trimming my ponies' feet and those of all my friends' horses.

"I had worked with a farrier part-time during weekends and school holidays since I was 15, but I realised that I needed further training, so I visited the United States in 1983 to attend the Montana State University



"I believe Damascus to be the ultimate in the blacksmith's art, and once I had made a few pieces, I wanted to do nothing else."

Horseshoeing School. I duly qualified as a certified farrier with the American Farriers Association and returned home to start my own business at the age of 19."

Then, according to Heather, it all went a bit sideways. "After spending a few years shoeing 300 horses a month, I developed a very bad allergy to horses, which was somewhat ironic. So I abandoned my career, turned to blacksmithing and joined Gold Reef City, a working museum depicting Johannesburg 100 years ago as a gold rush town. I occasionally got to rob the steam train on horseback and even worked briefly in their circus."

Although the staged train robberies and circus work were lots of fun, Heather says, the lure of the forge remained strong. "I focused mainly on decorative wrought-iron work until I tried

my hand at making Damascus [a blade-making process referring to forged and folded steel knives and swords characterised by distinctive patterns] in 1995 – and immediately became hooked.

"I believe Damascus to be the ultimate in the blacksmith's art, and once I had made a few pieces I wanted to do nothing else... That is, until I completed my first knife in 1997. At that point I realised I had found the absolute best thing to do – making your own steel and forging a knife from it!

"At the time, no one in South Africa was making traditional folded Damascus, so, in 1998, thanks to a scholarship from *Blade* magazine, I attended 'Introduction to Bladesmithing and Damascus', a course run by the American Bladesmith School in Old Washington in Arkansas in the US.

Kevin also attended the classes.

"Both of us came away enlightened and so enthusiastic about forging knives that we – together with Bertie Rietveld and Tom Nelson – went on to found the Southern African Bladesmiths Association."

Heather and Kevin helped to draw up a marking schedule to be used by the Knifemakers' Guild of Southern Africa's evaluation committee that recognised forged knives and allowed people to attain guild membership by submitting forged knives.

"In 2003, I became the first person to pass the guild evaluation using forged blades, and in the same year Kevin and I were recognised as Master Bladesmiths at the Blade Show in Atlanta. I was the second woman Master Bladesmith in the world; there are now four of us." >

She loved to experiment with different Damascus patterns, Heather says. “I especially enjoyed making replicas of traditional African weapons and primitive knives.”

As if her resumé wasn’t already impressive, Heather casually mentions she used to hold a licence to fly hot-air balloons and took part in the 1993 World Hot Air Balloon Championship in Luxembourg as navigator for the women’s team from South Africa.

KEVIN’S INTEREST in knives began when he was 12, an age when many boys are obsessed with their first zit and start to notice that girls are... *different*.

“I was introduced to the craft by my grandfather, who made knives

as a hobby. The knife-making bug bit me hard, and I have never been able to give up the habit. Does this sound like an addiction? It is. Knife lovers will understand and forgive me!”

Kevin completed a diploma in mechanical engineering and worked in a dynamite factory, serving his apprenticeship as a fitter-machinist. In 1991, to his great satisfaction, he was accepted as a member of the highly respected Knifemakers’ Guild of Southern Africa (he’s the current chairman).

“Highly collectible art knives are my speciality. I make my own Damascus steel and do both forged and stock-removed blades. Africa offers some of the most beautiful handle materials in the world – I use hippo, warthog, indigenous hardwoods, leguaan skin, crocodile skin, catfish skull and any

interesting horn or bone available.

“The knives I make are part of me. I love designing knives and reading every knife publication I can lay my hands on. Inspiration is everywhere! I am particularly fond of making Bowie knives. I do all my own engraving and embellishment too.

“We have also started a knife-making school, and present a variety of courses. I am passionate about teaching and understand the importance of keeping the art of the forged blade alive.”

Kevin’s formidable list of accolades includes “Finest Own Damascus”, “Best Sword”, “Best Knife on Show”, “Best Dagger”, and multiple service awards from professional bladesmith bodies in South Africa and the US.

THE COUPLE ARE ADAMANT that they will not accept commissions and will sell one of their blades only when it has been completed to their satisfaction. “We closed our order book 21 years ago when we moved to Belfast because we felt we would still be working for a ‘boss’,” Kevin

“The knives I make are part of me. I love designing knives and reading every knife publication I can lay my hands on. Inspiration is everywhere!”

PHOTO SIMON O’CALLAGHAN



Heather and Kevin with a few members of their large menagerie. Damascus is the happy Dalmatian, Mukwa is the ecstatic Ridgeback and Fudge is the half-hidden “Jack Muscle” cross.



explains. “We only make what we are inspired to make, and luckily it always sells!”

Do they keep any knives for themselves?

“Yes. We have a small collection of other makers’ knives as well as those made by our apprentices. The only two of our own that we kept are our American Bladesmith Society performance test knives, made from our own Damascus steel.”

What drives them? Is it the pursuit of perfection?

“The satisfaction lies in actually creating a knife,” Kevin says. “Once it’s finished, you want to make another even better than the previous one. It’s very satisfying to be able to sell the work to collectors who will cherish the piece and hand it down through generations.”

How about swords?

“Yes, we have both made swords,” Heather says. “In fact, Kevin recently won Best Sword, Best Own Damascus and Best Knife on Show with a Viking sword at the annual Knifemakers’ Guild of Southern Africa show in Johannesburg. I have made a Japanese katana sword >



ABOVE LEFT They call this one the Guardian Sword. Heather was responsible for the Damascus forging and heat treatment, and Kevin completed the rest of the work. The couple also created the beautifully detailed scabbard and other accoutrements.

LEFT It’s not all about work at Heavin Forge. Heather and Kevin also enjoy camping and fly-fishing, and often explore the countryside with their carriage pony Assegai.

and many African-style mambele swords in my own Damascus steel.

“We have just published our first book, *How to Make a Narrow Tang Knife*, which has been received very well locally and overseas. It’s the first volume in our planned Heavin Knows series.”

Is there a knife-making skill in any part of the world that they would like to acquire?

“Yes, the Russians are particularly good at filigree jewellery techniques on their knives, and we would love to learn how to do that,” Kevin says.

“We do all the work on our knives, from the engraving and stone setting to precious wire inlay as well as the leather work. The knives don’t leave our shop until they are complete. This is known as ‘sole authorship’, and it’s highly desirable when it comes to collectors buying knives as an investment.”

The couple’s roles have changed over the years. Heather has lived with permanent injuries to both hands since 2013 (see “Sometimes love hurts”) and can no longer participate in the physical side of bladesmithing. Instead, she handles admin, website maintenance and social media interaction for the forge, and assists – mostly by nagging, according to Kevin – during courses.

This works for her, Heather says: “Women are good at nagging.”

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“The Russians are particularly good at filigree jewellery techniques on their knives, and we would love to learn how to do that.”

Sometimes love hurts

No one will ever know what went through the mind of Valiant the ram when he lowered his head and “playfully” butted the woman who loved him. Ruminants are not as *dof* as their reputation suggests, so perhaps some of the neurons in Valiant’s little sheep brain were misfiring on that day in 2013.

Whatever the explanation, the result was both painful and messy. As Valiant rushed towards her, Heather instinctively put out her right hand. “The impact bent my thumb completely backwards, breaking it badly and tearing tendons and ligaments.”

By the time she saw a specialist, it was too late to reattach the tendons and ligaments, so the thumb was fused. “Next, one of the pins in my thumb started to come out and went through a nerve that controlled my trigger finger, which stopped working.”

A lesser woman might be tempted to keep her distance from livestock that behave badly, but Heather Harvey loves her animals unconditionally – and that includes wayward rams.

Seven months later, just when she thought she was ready to resume work in the forge, using her unharmed left hand and the three working fingers on her right hand, Heather suffered another mishap. This time, she was leading her old gelding, Rommel, into a paddock when her “gentle” mare Paris attacked him for no apparent reason.

“I was pressed up against the paddock fence and couldn’t get out of the way. Rommel turned to defend himself and accidentally bit me instead of Paris. That was my left-hand ulnar nerve gone. After two operations, I am missing part of my arm but at least I have some use of the hand... enough to type but not to work as a bladesmith.”

That wasn’t the end of it. In the same year she broke two fingers while attempting to free a young horse that had become stuck in a wooden fence. Oh, and another horse accidentally cracked her jaw and knocked out a tooth.

Heather remains philosophical: “Luckily, with the help of splints on both arms, I am still able to ride my horses, shoot and fly-fish.”



Heather with Valiant, her pet ram. They’re still friends, she says.



Forging art in the Karoo

Kashief Booley's journey as a blacksmith began in Cape Town 20 years ago, and continues today in the Karoo town of Prince Albert. Before his introduction to smithing, he worked as an oceanographic research assistant, spending long periods at sea and collecting data. As he recalls, "The job was fun and adventurous, but it was not for me."

So he resigned, not knowing what he'd do next. "By that stage I owned a property in the Bo-Kaap, Cape Town. It was my birthplace and I had strong roots there. The property became my first workshop. My father had taught me a bit of welding as a teenager, which offered me a good foundation. At that time I was mostly doing welding and fabricating, until the day I was faced with the challenge of forging something. I did a bit of research and realised that I needed fire to achieve the required result."

"I had no formal training as an artist or blacksmith but was soon overwhelmed with work. I quickly realised that I had to take a more professional approach, which required a move to bigger premises."

"My first visit to a smithy in Cape Town's Heritage Square was magical. To my surprise, I found that two guys I had grown up with in the Bo-Kaap were employed there. They helped me to see the process unfold, and when they lit the fire in the forge, something changed in me. A whole new world opened up."

"I came to understand that the fire is not just a fire; it is one of the elements and it can be harnessed. I came to realise that a blacksmith had a unique place in history and in many cultures around the world."

"When I moved to a bigger workshop, the first thing I did was build a forge. It didn't take long for us to accumulate all the necessary tools to get started. Together with my brother Mustapha and my >

ABOVE Kashief Booley acknowledges and celebrates the millennia-long history of blacksmithing. "It's the only craft I know of that employs the four elements of nature. You become the fifth element. Magic happens when we light the forge, and I am proud to be part of this ancient craft."

AGE-OLD CRAFT

wife Sophia, I established a smithy and named it Striking Metal.

“We were all hugely unqualified but we had the guts and confidence to tackle every job that came our way. For eight years we forged ahead in Cape Town and the business grew to a point where I had to employ more people. By this time we had relocated to the new and trendy The Biscuit Mill in Woodstock.

They were always busy and soon the work became too much – Sundays became part of his work week, Kashief says. “I also started to feel trapped by the city, and began journeying into the Karoo and other places to escape the rat race. I was never comfortable raising kids in the city, so I began to think about relocating my work and family. Finally, in 2010, we moved everything to Prince Albert, at the foot of the Swartberg range in the Karoo. It’s a town with an interesting history and lots of characters.”

IT WASN’T AN EASY relocation, Kashief says. For starters, they had to move 17 tonnes of smithy

equipment and other belongings. Then he had to dismiss his team, a painful but unavoidable experience. “I had to scale down from a team of 10 to being on my own.”

That said, he was up to the challenge. “I figured that being the village blacksmith would be something to live up to in my new environment. Prince Albert is a beautiful village known as the jewel of the Karoo, and has become quite a trendy place to visit. Against that, it has issues stemming from the racial divide, and foetal alcohol syndrome is a serious problem.

“I would like to believe that by setting up shop I have in some way inspired people. Twelve years on, I am still forging ahead with the help of another blacksmith, Robbie, who shares my passion for blacksmithing and has 40 years’ experience, having learnt the trade as an apprentice on the mines in the former Transvaal.

“We make all kinds of stuff, ranging from architectural to sculptural pieces and even basic tooling. There is never *not* a reason to light the forge. I cannot be sure which job stands out the most, but it’s probably the door I made for a client in Cape Town. It weighed about 3 tonnes and stood 6m tall. We had to use a crane to install it.

“My goal is to set up a bigger space to teach this craft to anyone who is interested. I run a one-day blacksmithing course and offer demos to people visiting the village. It’s all about the preservation of the oldest skills and passing on the legacy of the blacksmith.”

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ABOVE An elegant wrought-iron gate from Kashief’s forge.

ABOVE RIGHT Call it industrial chic or simply a work of art, the iron does the job.

RIGHT Kashief Booley at work in his Prince Albert forge. “I was engulfed by the vastness of what a blacksmith could do.”



These dragons breathe fire, obviously

Neels van den Berg is the self-described “owner, operator, bottle washer and cook” at Black Dragon Forge in Lanseria, Gauteng. He’s also a Master Bladesmith – one of very few people in South Africa recognised as such – and has spent more than a decade honing his skills, producing knives that qualify as minor masterpieces.

Neels offers a variety of blade-smithing classes, taking participants through the basics of tool use and essential skills, but much of his time is devoted to the production of gas-fired forges. These range from the relatively basic “Postbox” and “Firefly” options, used for

bladesmithing, general forging and heat-treatment of carbon steel, to a casting furnace used to smelt gold, silver, copper, aluminium, brass, bronze and other metals, and the Pro Damascus Forge, a forced-air design used for high-volume manufacturing.

“I have spent countless hours over the past 13 years refining my range of forges through daily use and listening to feedback from those in the smithing community. It’s not just about making and selling forges; it’s also about building a lasting relationship with smiths and guiding them on using the forges to their full potential.”

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ABOVE Fire in the hole! Black Dragon Forge turns out a variety of gas-fuelled forges as well as a casting furnace.

BELOW Bladesmith and forge maker Neels van den Berg has won multiple awards at shows over the years for his finely crafted blades, including recognition for the best Bowie knife, best dagger, best art knife and best art fixed blade.

‘It’s not just about making and selling forges; it’s about building a lasting relationship with smiths...’



AGE-OLD CRAFT

Celebrating the past, embracing the future

Blacksmith Paul Mikula operates what is thought to be the only “green” forge in the country, turning out exquisite metal creations from his superbly equipped workspace in Hartbeespoort in North West without wasting a second worrying about Eskom’s travails. That’s because Mikula Forge is powered entirely by solar energy.

Many of his sculptures are created from found objects and antique ox-wagon parts that were originally forged in England about 150 years ago. “These helped make the South African ox-wagon the best heavy transport in its day,” Paul says. “This material is perfect for my sculptures because not only is it almost pure wrought iron, but it also holds the history and context reflected in the finished piece.” In essence, he creates contemporary pieces using age-old techniques.

Paul’s body of work is large and varied, including axes, hammers, sculptures and tables to balustrades, chandeliers, lampstands and headboards, all of them bespoke. He has also made a striking Viking rune,



Paul Mikula finds treasures in unexpected places, and will happily repurpose an ancient fence post or venerable wagon spring for his bespoke artworks.



ABOVE *African Sun Mandala*, which Paul forged with students at the Hereford College of Design in the UK.

LEFT Ancient warcraft: Paul’s Viking battle axe and shield.

a large gemsbok sculpture forged from a century-old-wagon axle and mounted on an old gatepost, a quirky seahorse, tomahawks with hickory shafts, and a tall battle standard fashioned from forged iron, copper and rock from the Magaliesberg.

As Paul sees it, the past and the future are inextricably entwined – and it shows in the way he works. “I forge pieces that are challenging to me, that will hold lasting value, have gravitas, enhance their surroundings and link the past and present,” he says.

“To turn an inherently hard material into a plastic state, to work it with tools used for centuries with techniques passed from master to apprentice through the ages, and to be able to make my own designs are what make this creative process magical and fascinating.” **P**

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In the beginning...

Archaeological evidence suggests that blacksmithing began about 3 500 years ago, not long after an ancient group of Indo-Europeans known as Hittites created an empire in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey).

Although the Hittites had little more than fire and basic tools, they were able to forge crude weapons such as spearheads and arrows that would be attached to poles or sticks. A major breakthrough was the discovery that charcoal allowed a forge to burn hot for a long period, allowing blacksmiths to control the process and create more complex items.

Then came steel, created by combining iron ore and carbon (generally from charcoal). Steel weapons inevitably replaced those fashioned from iron, which was sometimes too soft or brittle to be useful.

During the medieval period, blacksmiths were central to village life and would turn out items such as weapons, armour, nails, furniture, locks and horseshoes. There was occasionally a downside to their skills, however: outsiders regarded them as so mysterious that they were suspected of using magic. Some blacksmiths were even burnt at the stake.



“I forge pieces that are challenging to me, that will hold lasting value, have gravitas, enhance their surroundings and link the past and present.”

PHOTO ESSAY

WOOL POWER

When you're offered the chance to travel to the Karoo to experience the very first festival dedicated to celebrating every aspect of South Africa's renowned wool industry, you don't think twice!

PHOTOS AND TEXT SAMANTHA REINDERS



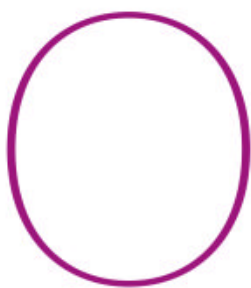
**All the colours under
the Karoo sun**

South Africa produces about 12% of the world's apparel wool, and it is known for its high quality. The inaugural Karoo Winter Wool Festival set out to celebrate this fact – and all things farm to fibre to fashion in our country.



Baaa-aa

Regenerative farming practices were the talk of the town during the festival. It's about fostering a symbiotic relationship between animals, humans and plants and the soil to create a balanced ecosystem. Third-generation farmer Stefan Erasmus of Beskuitfontein introduced us to his flock of happy sheep while he and his workers were counting them.



ut of the blue I got a call from an editor I'd once worked with: "My team and I are going to the Karoo Winter Wool

Festival in June. It's in Middelburg. We need a photo..." Before she could finish the sentence, and before budget or logistics were discussed, I'd said yes. I mean, sheep, the Karoo, a *skuurdans*, a *markie*... I am all in.

That is how I found myself travelling from Mogadishu to Middelburg via Gqeberha in the space of one week. (Don't try this with your average travel agent.) And before you could say "baa" I was standing on the back of a bakkie, my knuckles white from the cold and hanging on to the cattle rails as farmer Stefan Erasmus zoomed us around Beskuitfontein, the farm

where he and his wife Yolandi raise Merino sheep. It was bone-chillingly cold – Middelburg in mid-winter is no joke. Stefan explained the process of counting the sheep and enthused about the rejuvenating farming practices he uses and teaches. We rescued a new-born lamb and its mother from the cold and brought them back with us to the shed, where Stefan talked us through the shearing process and showed us wools of different qualities – the kind that will be bundled into 120kg bales and sent off to Gqeberha for auction and then on to other countries for processing.

All this was just a primer of what was to come over a weekend of all things woollen, and an introduction to the people in this corner of the Karoo.

I was back in my happy place.

THE FESTIVAL ITSELF started in earnest the following day and attracted an extraordinary assemblage of farmers, weavers, dyers, designers, makers and businesses working with South African wool of all kinds.

The first Merino sheep wobbled off a ship at the Cape of Good Hope in 1789. Today, South Africa is home to an estimated 9000 commercial wool farmers and more than 40000 start-up and communal wool farmers who produce nearly 50 million kilograms of wool, valued at about R6 billion per year. If this isn't reason enough for festivity, then nothing is.

Headquarters for the first day was the beautiful farm Dwarsvlei, owned by the Van Lingen family. In the sprawling farmhouse with its creaky floors and family photographs going back generations – including >

Knitting for the win

You couldn't move anywhere during the weekend without hearing the clicking of knitting needles. From left: Nobanzi Sokhuthu, production assistant at Twyg – a storytelling NPO working at the intersection of fashion and sustainability – learns how to knit. Needles for sale at Karoo Moon, which won the prize for the best stall at the festival. While family and friends were out shopping, attending talks or dining and drinking, some just found a hay bale and did what they loved most: knit.



All wrapped up

Natalie Green, founder of INKE Knitwear, models items from her collection. "The name comes from my grandmother; it means 'she who is most important,'" Natalie says. The wool and mohair yarns they use come mainly from the Karoo and the Eastern Cape, and they knit and complete the garments in Cape Town, where INKE is based.

PHOTO ESSAY

photographs of prize sheep – people on laptops among tangled cords were running a curated set of online talks hosted by Twyg and Cape Wools. People in Cape Town, Lagos, Geneva, Johannesburg, Lisbon, Antananarivo and, of course, Middelburg, were Zooming about farm, fibre and fashion. All this against a backdrop of frenzied preparation for the next day's market: the beeping of a reversing delivery truck as tables and chairs were unloaded, and bunting and signage were put up...

THE EVENING'S FESTIVITIES happened on a farm on the other side of Middelburg. Driving 40 km for a party? No big deal in the Karoo! We slithered and slid to Rusoord along a muddy road and arrived to a ball of light and life in an otherwise pitch-dark landscape. It was otherworldly. >

Woolly winners

Graaff Reinet's prize-winning sheep were there for all to meet during the festival. In this photograph, Prince nibbles on Top Gun's name tag.



Teaching the trade

In 1860, an advertisement was placed for sheep sold from the farm Wellwood in the Graaff-Reinet district that described them as “the best sheep in the Eastern Province, if not in the colony, combining fineness, weight of fleece, and carcass.” In 2022, the farm is still in the Rubidge family and the sheep continue to win awards. The family brought some of their champions to the festival as a teaching tool to explain micron, length, clean yield and strength of the fibre to those who were keen to learn.



Ready, set... action

A series of workshops was held concurrently with the market and the textile talks.

LEFT "Felting with Karen", which was popular with the younger festival-goers, was taught by Karen Platte, who has a passion for creating felted items with Merino wool. She dyes her own wool by hand – something she's done since 2004 when no one else in South Africa was doing it. She now offers a colour range of more than 60 hand-dyed wools, including Merino, Karakul and Mohair Curls.

BELOW Jonette Schoeman, the founder of GreyRoom, which specialises in hand-woven luxury homeware, presented a workshop on basic weaving techniques. The participants could weave their own wall art.





Karoo karaoke

Riaan Benade (and the odd guest performer) got the *velskoene* tapping on the farm Rusoord on the Friday evening of the festival.

Inside the biggest shed I've ever seen, where generations of the Moolman family have been shearing their sheep, was just about all of Middelburg's residents (including newborns in prams, pushed to the corner and checked on every now and again). They were ready for a good time, and that's what they got.

On a stage built out of pallets, Riaan Benade provided top entertainment. His teenage fans in the audience mouthed all the words to his songs, stopping only to shriek in admiration. Local *tannies* had food on the go and the bar was pumping. The DJ hit just the right spot for a *langarm* session during which the pros showed the city folk the ropes – with hilarious results, of course.

It took me 30 minutes to de-ice my car on Saturday morning – but it was well worth it to stand with a cup of steaming coffee in my hands and watch bleary-eyed as a bunch of brave runners, hikers and cyclists hit the trails on Beskuitfontein. Recently thawed drops hung from fences and sparkled in the morning light as they ran and cycled through mud and Karoo veld. I *almost* felt jealous.

THE SATURDAY MARKET was the jewel in the festival's crown. Dwarsvlei came alive with stalls that sold wares by some of South Africa's top wool creatives: Adèle's Mohair from Port Alfred; Blankets for Africa, a project by Roslyn Becht, who wanted to create sustainable livelihoods for women in the Karoo; Gerber & Co, loved for its 100% organic Namaqualand Merino wool knitwear; Karoo Creations, whose fabulous woollen duvets are made by Aubrey Williams and Lionel Millard from Richmond; Karoo Moon, whose range of hand-dyed natural yarn and accessories was such a riot of colour it was named best stall at the festival; Wrapt Knitwear from Joburg... and so many more!

There was a sheep-shearing contest (naturally) and >





Hospitality, Karoo style

This festival was not only about wool but also about celebrating all things Karoo. The *skuurdans*, or dance in the shed, was a great example of Karoo hospitality: it was a merry occasion where everyone was made to feel welcome, and the food was delicious.



PHOTO ESSAY

Graaff-Reinet's prize-winning sheep – Magnum, Prince, Bakgat and friends – were on display for all to inspect their fleece. There were workshops on dyeing, felting, knitting and weaving. Kids were kept busy with face painting and a jumping castle. Glühwein cut through the cold to keep knitters knitting, farmers catching up, locals shopping and designers dreaming. Bellies were kept full of local Karoo cuisine and one of the best spit braais I think I've ever tasted. Nearly everyone seemed to know one another, and outsiders were welcomed as friends – Karoo hospitality at its finest.

Without a doubt I'll be back.

- The next Karoo Winter Wool Festival is scheduled to take place in Middelburg on 22–25 June 2023.
🖱️ karoowinterwoolfestival.com

Fashion, fibre and fitness

Early on the Saturday morning, runners, hikers and mountain bikers tackled a 5 km or 10 km trail run and a 27 km MTB challenge on Beskuitfontein farm. It was a muddy, child-friendly event. Bonfires and hot coffee helped to warm up participants before they set off. Some of those who didn't run, walk or cycle, napped.



REASONS TO WEAR WOOL

A few of the many benefits of wool clothing:

- Wool is a truly regenerative and renewable fibre – once shorn, it grows back with no harm to the sheep.
- Wool is biodegradable, unlike synthetic fibres, which end up disintegrating into microplastics and polluting our soil and water systems.
- Wool is not only long-wearing and biodegradable but also readily recyclable, and can be reused in, for example, insulation, mattresses, felted blankets and carpet underlay.





Au naturel

Ira Bekker, the founder of Botanical Nomad, does eco-printing, botanical dyeing, wool spinning and slow stitching.



Tones and textures

Festival-goers could sign up for a workshop with Botanical Nomad's Ira Bekker to learn about plant pigments and how to use these soil-safe dyes to dye wool.



A mohair scarf by Adele's Mohair, which is based in Port Alfred. The South African mohair industry produces some of the best quality yarn in the world.



You can't get a more indigenous plant-derived dye than that from imphepho, or *kooigoed*. Almost any plant will work – the fun is in the experimentation.

A photograph of a sheep and a lamb walking away from the camera on a dirt road. The sheep is on the left, and the lamb is on the right. They are walking towards a dirt road that leads into a wooded area. The sheep has a blue tag on its ear. The lamb is white. The background is filled with trees and greenery.

A growing industry

As the sustainable fashion movement grows, sustainability, ethics, animal welfare and the environment are becoming increasingly important as factors influencing clothing choices. When you're clothes shopping, do you think about the origin of the yarn used to weave or knit a garment? Then you're part of this movement towards more ethical fashion choices. **P**

I MADE THE MOVE

At a canter to Philippolis

After half a lifetime in the city and 20 years in the police, Juliette Whelpton was eager for her life to take a new direction. A documentary about the Anglo-Boer War and footage of Fleur, General Christiaan de Wet's Arabian horse, became the point of departure for her series of children's books *Heroes with Hooves*. And she followed the spoor from Pretoria to Kaapsehoop... and then to Philippolis.

TEXT AND PHOTOS MIA LOUW



Juliette offers wellness workshops, during which she uses horses to facilitate interaction. She calls her business Healing Hooves. Here, she approaches Tanya Kriel's horse Selena.



It's quiet in Philippolis: it is the beginning of winter and the middle of the week, and holidaymakers travelling between Johannesburg and Cape Town are few and far between. The only noticeable activity is at the Karoo Artist's Café.

There is, in fact, always something happening at Juliette Whelpton's art café in Tobie Muller Street, arguably the most scenic street in the Free State's oldest settlement. There's a difference of opinion whether the town's 200th anniversary should be celebrated in 2022 or 2023, but today a famous South African author is being commemorated at the weekly book reading at 11am. It's Kobie Gouws's turn to entertain the group with a CJ Langenhoven short story "Oom Hendrik in die spookhuis" (Oom Hendrik in the haunted house).

"Tannie Kobie is also a writer," Juliette tells me. "We have many

writers in this town. Our book readings started spontaneously. At first we were just an arts and crafts group, and Tannie Kobie began to do readings while the others were working."

The Karoo Artist's Café is a pet-friendly meeting place for artists, poets, musicians and storytellers. It's also a haven for vegetarians and vegans, especially in this part of the world, where lamb chops and sheep's tails are standard fare. It's here where Juliette's four greatest loves come together: books, music, food and horses. Aside from the café, she also runs Healing Hooves, offering wellness workshops that involve horses.

In fact, horses – specifically a white Arabian named Maharajah – are the reason Juliette finds herself in Philippolis. Maharajah was a stallion that belonged to the British general and politician

John Edward Bernard Seely (aka Jack Seely), who was stationed in the Philippolis area, and the fourth horse from the Anglo-Boer War era to be the subject of one of Juliette's books. The other three are General Christiaan de Wet's Fleur, General Koos de la Rey's Bokkie and General Louis Botha's Dapper. The series tells the story of the war from the perspective of these four horses.

"The books are aimed at children between the ages of 9 and 14, but the historical information they contain means that older readers also enjoy them. I wanted to know for myself: what did it feel like to be a horse during this war? It's unique to our country and history, and my intention was not to imitate the story of *War Horse*."

Her research for *Heroes with Hooves* took Juliette to several battlefields around the country. She lived in Kaapsehoop in Mpumalanga from





2016 to 2018. The wild horses that roam the northern edge of the Drakensberg are descendents of the Anglo-Boer War horses.

“Horses are the golden thread that led me to both Kaapsehoop and Philippolis – and of course the natural beauty played a role too! It was heavenly in Kaapsehoop, and I became involved in tourism there, with scooter and horse tours.”

JULIETTE’S JOURNEY with horses had begun much earlier in her life. Her father’s love of these animals influenced her from the time she was a toddler, when they lived in Burgershoop, Krugersdorp.

“I was only three years old when my father gave me a palomino named Ruby. We lived in a tiny house next to the school – Ruby slept in our garage and grazed on the school grounds during the day. Later, we moved to a plot in

Krugersdorp and got more horses.”

Although Juliette was interested in the role horses play in the lives of humans from a young age, she only really understood how powerful this influence was while she worked for the South African Police Service.

At the age of 19, Juliette decided she wanted to make a difference in people’s lives and joined the police – she first worked for the Security Police and later the Cyber Crime specialised unit.

“I conducted computer-related investigations for Crime Intelligence. It was interesting work, as I wasn’t involved with only one type of crime. We investigated everything from terrorism to sabotage, working proactively and reactively with agents and spies... but if I told you more I’d have to kill you,” she says with a wink.

“I would choose the same work all over again if I had the chance. You have to think on your feet >

ABOVE AND ABOVE LEFT Besides the decorations like classic movie posters and plants that adorn Juliette’s Karoo Artist’s Café, works of art by local artists that are for sale grace the walls.

OPPOSITE Kobie Gouws entertains locals at the weekly book reading at the Karoo Artist’s Café.



ABOVE A local rider takes his horse to a watering hole just outside Philippolis. The NG church building in the background was inaugurated in 1871.

OPPOSITE TOP Boer goats make their way east from the centre of Philippolis to the township Poding-Tse-Rolo.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM Descendants of horses used during the Anglo-Boer War follow the tar road that goes past Kaapsehoop.



and constantly outwit the criminals. There is creativity in choosing your approach to fighting crime, but it did start to take its toll.”

Juliette began to recognise the symptoms of post-traumatic stress and burnout in her colleagues. “I had to investigate internet-related crimes against children. You see the darkest side of people – as Friedrich Nietzsche said, ‘If you look into the abyss long enough, the abyss will look into you.’”

When she was given the opportunity to study towards a doctorate in psychology, she took it with open arms. Her thesis focused on how to help people who experience secondary post-traumatic stress, and she researched the effect of computer-related crimes on her colleagues. “Although you are not on the scene yourself, you see and hear terrible things. You have to work your way

into networks of darkness and communicate with criminals.”

She realised that conventional treatment and debriefing sessions were not necessarily effective for her colleagues. A tiny consulting room is not optimal for someone who is at ease outdoors, like a veteran policeman or a soldier. Because of her love of horses, Juliette investigated how these majestic animals could be utilised in a counselling context. This was when, as part of her training, she crossed paths with Eagala, the Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association.

She is quick to correct you if you use the term “equine therapy”. She prefers “wellness workshops with the assistance of horses”, and the focus is on personal growth and development.

After a 20-year career in the police, Juliette decided in 2012 >



I MADE THE MOVE

Tanya Kriel and her horse Charmaine pick up guests for a tour of the town.



to call it a day, after attending a book discussion about the Anglo-Boer War at a bookshop in Pretoria.

“They screened video footage from the war. I never used to like history – I blame my teachers, who only focused on dates and places and not on the stories. And in the footage I saw General Christiaan de Wet’s Fleur... and that’s where it all started. I wanted to follow in Fleur’s spoor and tell his story.”

Stories are appreciated in Philippolis, and at the Karoo Artist’s Café’s book reading we listen to Tannie Kobie paint a vivid picture in Langenhoven’s words of a rain shower in the Karoo turning the veld into a flower garden. Afterwards, everyone tucks into koeksisters and coffee.

Juliette loves gardening, which is evident the moment you enter the café. Ferns and arum lilies flourish under a neon-pink grow light that runs along one side of the rectangular building. Dried tolbos

hangs from the high ceiling, and the works of local artists are displayed for sale on the walls. In between are a few classic movie posters: *Breakfast at Tiffany’s*, a James Bond movie, and *Star Trek’s* Dr Spock with his greeting “Live long and prosper” – an apt motto for a business focused on health and wellbeing.

At the back of the yard, under a shed roof, are rosebushes – this is an outlet for Ludwig’s Roses – and on an adjacent patch of land there’s a vegetable garden. “It’s small, but we’ve lived off that garden since I opened the café in 2020.”

JULIETTE’S ELDEST daughter, Nadine, is studying in London. Her youngest, Carla, is currently visiting her mother in Philippolis. In fact, it is for Carla, a vegan, that Juliette started to prepare plant-based dishes. Karoo Artist’s Café also serves meat, but the focus is on vegetarian and vegan food.

“People don’t always realise how tasty plant-based food is. When you exclude meat and dairy, you start to appreciate herbs and other flavourings,” Juliette says as she prepares lunch. One of the things that are great about a small town like Philippolis is that Juliette knows where all her ingredients come from. A friend baked the bread and another made the tomato jam, the butter comes from a farm nearby, and the spinach grows in the café garden.

There’s another large rectangular building next to the vegetable garden. “It was the first classroom in the town, built around 1870. I am slowly turning it into a place to live.”

The history of the café building is a bit of a mystery. Some say it was a second classroom added in 1880 when the first became too small, but Juliette has a photo that tells another story: It shows a room that looks like the interior of the Karoo Artist’s Café: from the >



ABOVE In the small vegetable garden behind the Karoo Artist’s Café, Juliette grows spinach and other crops.

LEFT Nearly all the ingredients in these plant-based dishes that Juliette is preparing for guests are locally sourced.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The Karoo Artist’s Café is an open-plan space, with the kitchen just beyond the counter.

I MADE THE MOVE

shape of the building and the height of the ceiling to the wooden beams, cornices and windows. Inside, women are spinning and weaving. Emily Hobhouse opened the first spinning and weaving school in Philippolis in 1905, but according to research, that historical building was in Voortrekker Street.

“People say the original spinning and weaving school was where the Foodzone is today, opposite the Emily Hobhouse Memorial and Garden of Remembrance. But Nico Moolman came across this photo while researching one of his books and sent it to me. If that’s not my building, I’ll eat my hat,” Juliette says, laughing.

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER it was once a classroom or a weaving school, Juliette’s mystery café

is the sort of space that can be transformed in no time into a venue for a book reading, a blues show or a movie screening. Musicians often perform here, and it is where locals sell their wares at the weekly Stoepklets Market. You’ll find the Starry Nights Karoo Cottages next to the café – two self-catering units that Juliette owns and rents out to visitors or people attending her wellness workshops.

Juliette is registered with the Association for Supportive Counsellors and Holistic Practitioners (ASCHP) as a specialist wellness counsellor. “I don’t refer to it as therapy or treatment. It’s all about restoring homeostasis, balance. Horses, food and art are used as aids. It’s a sensorial experience that helps you to live in the moment, to practise some mindfulness.”

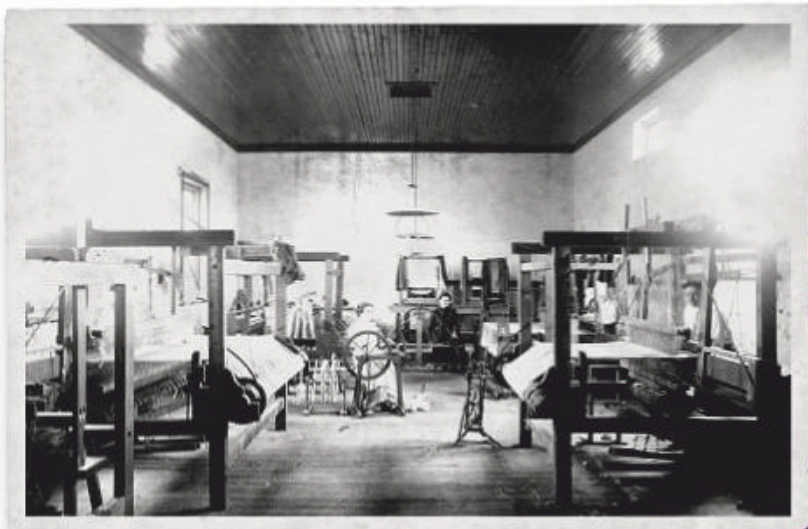
Juliette limits the numbers to eight people per workshop, and either

prepares the food herself or takes guests to eateries in town, such as Die Groenhuis Guesthouse or Ouma Anna Restaurant @ Van der Post.

In Pretoria Juliette used her own horses for the workshops, but in Philippolis we visit Tanya Kriel’s stables on the outskirts of town. “We don’t do horse riding; it’s simply about being with the animals, appreciating and identifying with them.”

A WORKSHOP USUALLY runs over a weekend, which means Juliette has quite a challenge tackling my wellness in just one afternoon. Because we’re a smaller group, Tanya picks us up right outside the Karoo Artist’s Café in a horse cart. (She also offers tours of the town at R100 per person.)

There are several steps to Juliette’s programme, yet it all starts with an intention or goal that you have



ABOVE Juliette is convinced this old photograph was taken inside the building that now houses the Karoo Artist’s Café – the ceiling, the cornices and the windows all look the same. The photo depicts women spinning and weaving.

RIGHT Blues musicians from Cape Town – the Hugo Veldsman Trio and Blackwood Wendy – perform at the Karoo Artist’s Café.

OPPOSITE Juliette says horses respond to people’s emotions, which is why they’re such a good aid in her wellness workshops.





to identify within yourself. “Who are you really? What do you really want to strengthen?” Juliette asks. Luckily the horses are present to assist with this step.

“These intentions are usually in our subconscious and difficult to articulate. The horse becomes a symbol of something that is happening in your life. You might see a mare running away from a stallion, and this could remind you of your own marriage.”

The next steps involve art and stream-of-consciousness writing: a short story written in 60 seconds. These creative processes help participants achieve “a eureka moment of insight”, Juliette says.

Now, why are horses so effective for this purpose? “They are herd animals, which means they have a hierarchy and they are temperamental, just like people – they are always challenging one another,” Juliette says. “Moreover,

they’re agile animals. They’re hypersensitive, know when we are afraid or sad, and respond to our emotions. Horses will show a specific temperament depending on who they are with, which means they expose different personalities with which we can identify.”

Now it’s my turn with the horses. “You can look at them, walk around them, approach them, but just observe them,” Juliette says. I walk closer and start to take photos, but not one horse will look at my camera; they’re more interested in their feed.

“Stubborn,” I think to myself.

“Did any of the horses stand out for you?” Juliette asks later. “The one brown mare that looked up and paid me some attention,” I mutter. After a few questions back and forth, it hits me: as a people pleaser, I can be quite sensitive when others appear to be cold towards me. Here I was offended because the horses

were ignoring me but could I blame them? They were hungry and just wanted to graze in peace.

Juliette smiles broadly. “There you have it. The horses show you not to take things so personally. That is your intention, the thing you really want to work on.”

Suddenly there’s a ruckus among the horses. Maximus, or Little Max, the “typical show-off pony”, storms into the group and sends them running. “Small-man syndrome!” I exclaim.

Juliette turns quickly: “Just look at that. Who’s the Little Max in your life?” 

Contact Karoo Artist’s Café

 karooartistscafe.business.site

 Karoo Artist’s Café

Healing Hooves  healinghooves.co.za

Helde met Hoewe  Helde met

Hoewe / Heroes with Hooves

Starry Nights Karoo Cottages  Starry Nights Karoo Cottages

The art of
cigars

A hand-rolled cigar is nothing like a cigarette. You need time to smoke a cigar to truly appreciate the aromas, and you don't inhale the smoke. What's more, each Santa Bras cigar, rolled by hand using tobacco grown locally, is truly a work of art.

TEXT AND PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD





We had no idea what a revelation it would be: we didn't know that a mouthful of smoke – slowly drawn into your mouth through the delicate folds of rolled tobacco leaves and then gently swirled over the taste areas of your tongue – could evoke flavours like honey, cashew nut and cherry... or citrus, cardamom and bread... or even moss and hay.

For the record: Both of us *Platteland* editors are ex-cigarette-smokers who kicked the habit more than a decade ago. The revelation didn't occur at El Floridita

in Havana, Cuba, where Ernest Hemingway used to hang out. And it wasn't a Fidel Castro impersonator or a reincarnated Winston Churchill who introduced us to the finer points of smoking a cigar. Nor was it the legendary Graciela Gonzalez, aka Granny Puretta, who, in 2008, at the age of 84, agreed to pose with a cigar clamped between her teeth outside the same El Floridita – for no less than \$5... US dollars. We handed over the money. (Please excuse the closed eyes; we wanted to take another photo but she demanded another \$5.)

During this trip to Cuba we bought two single cigars as gifts for friends back in South Africa, an act that nearly cost us much

dearer. It was shortly after Fidel Castro had formally relinquished the presidency, and Americans were restricted from visiting Cuba as tourists. The friendly Cuban customs officials generously neglected to stamp any passport (for the sake of adventurous Americans) but rather stapled a document to it that could be removed later.

And what did I do? I implored the customs official to put the Havana stamp directly in my passport. Surprisingly enough, he agreed; other officials flatly refused to do it. We did like the Americans do and flew a detour to New York, in our case, via Cancún in Mexico. It's a whole day's journey.

It was early evening when



LEFT Jaco made most of the cigars in this display case in the Snyman home, but among them are a few other brands.

BELOW MIDDLE AND LEFT The legendary Graciela Gonzalez, photographed in Havana, Cuba, in 2008. Annerie was also willing to pose for a photo, but "I won't let you take a photograph of me from the front with a thick cigar in my mouth!"

BELOW Jaco puffs on a cigar that he made himself, from harvesting to rolling the tobacco leaves.



I presented my green booklet to the customs official with the twang. He looked up at me with a look of surprise on his face and exclaimed, "You went to *Cuba*?" And then, even louder, "Did you buy cigars?" Calmly, I nodded yes. Two.

My travel companion was summoned forthwith, our passports were sealed in ziplock bags, and we were marched to a room where we found ourselves among a host of souls in the same boat: each one a suspect. We were from the Dark Continent or the Middle East or a former Eastern Bloc country; English was a second language at best.

An hour later, our names were called. "So, you bought cigars?"

asked the policeman assigned to interrogate the two of us. We both nodded in the affirmative. Two.

"And how was your trip?" He smiled, seemed interested, asked questions about our visit to Cuba, about South Africa and about the rainbow nation... And then, "Are you sure you only bought two cigars?" Another two startled nods.

By this time it was long past dark and we assumed our hosts had given up on us arriving. The trains had stopped running. And we had no idea where our luggage was. A proper mess.

The friendly policeman at least solved the mystery of our baggage by escorting us to the next room, where our two lone suitcases were

waiting. "Unpack them. Everything." And there, among the socks and sweets and underwear and coffee and small bottles of rum and rolled-up paintings by Cuban artists were the two lone cigars, neatly wrapped in cellophane. The cause of all the trouble.

The official had an incredulous look on his face. He'd never encountered such honesty. Apologies for the delay and enjoy New York and travel safely back to South Africa. And then, almost as an afterthought, "Oh, and you may keep the cigars... for your honesty."

OUR INITIATION into the intricacies of cigars happens on the second floor of a beach house in Glentana >

in the Southern Cape. We're enjoying a relaxing smoke with Jaco and Annerie Snyman, the owners of Santa Bras, the only producer of hand-rolled cigars in South Africa – with plans to become the biggest in the southern hemisphere. "Every large producer in the world started out as a small family business," Jaco quips.

What makes Santa Bras' story exceptional is that Jaco obtains his own tobacco seed, and an Oudtshoorn farmer is cultivating the tobacco for him. Jaco harvests, dries and cures the leaves himself. Even the boxes in which the cigars are packaged are part of this "home industry": Annerie did the design, and Jaco makes them in the garage.

The Snymans talk enthusiastically about their journey with tobacco. They keep interrupting each other, correcting each other, look at each other in mock anger and winking at each other with affection.

The wisecracks keep coming.

Jaco, a lawyer with two master's

How to smoke a cigar

"Just like it's an art to make a cigar, it's also an art to smoke one," Jaco says.

"The first thing you need to know is that a cigar is fire-resistant. Do not be embarrassed if it takes you up to 10 minute to light it – the aromatic oils will turn against you if you try to take a short cut and light it too fast. Besides, it's part of the ritual."

You don't have to smoke an entire cigar in one sitting.

"When you've had enough or the cigar has gone out, blow air into it three times as if you were blowing into a trumpet. Lightly rotate the cigar against the edge of the ashtray and tap it gently to break the ash off evenly. Before you light the cigar again, blow into it once more to help expel any old smoke and ash trapped in it, and then you can continue to enjoy it."

It is important to understand the difference between aroma and flavour, Jaco says. "You detect aroma with your sense of smell, and you get it on the cold draw of the cigar. You taste the flavour on your tongue."

The second important thing to keep in mind, he says, is to enjoy the experience. "You have to be in the right mood: relaxed, with time on your hands. Like Churchill said, 'I don't meditate; I smoke cigars.'"

The third thing, both Jaco and Annerie say, is that you should respect the cigar in your hand. Enjoy just a little bit – when you've had enough, put it down and allow it to go out by itself – which will happen within 45 seconds to 2 minutes if you're not puffing on it.

"People don't have time anymore," Annerie says. "This is the luxury of a cigar: you block out 2 hours with a bottle of wine or whisky and good company." She winks at her "*Pappabeer*".

And what would they recommend for beginners? "Escobar!"



ABOVE This is what a tobacco leaf looks like after it has been dried and fermented, ready to be processed – look at the elasticity and the sheen! **MIDDLE** The core of a cigar, consisting of a bunch of rolled leaves, is called the filler. Next, the filler will be rolled into a binder leaf and then a wrapper leaf. **RIGHT** Before you light a cigar, you first have to cut off a couple of millimetres at the closed end, or the cap, at the head of the cigar. You need a sharp specialised cutter to make a clean cut without tearing the wrapper and damaging the cigar's structure. **OPPOSITE** This is where Jaco Snyman is probably at his happiest: in his workspace, busy rolling a cigar.

degrees to his name, and Annerie, a business analyst with a PhD in geology and many other talents, both love life and the finer things in life – like red wine, whisky, music, books, animals... Which is why they have a bottle of whisky *and* a bottle of red wine on hand for the cigar tasting and pairing.

The one thing that neither of them has ever done is smoke cigarettes. “The main difference,” Jaco says, “is that cigars are made for the flavour and cigarettes for the kick. Cigars are kind of the slow food version, the vegan version! Unlike in cigarettes, we try to increase the levels of aromatic oils in the leaves and decrease the nicotine levels.”

Annerie: “Cigarettes are from a sausage machine; they all have the same flavour. Not cigars. The foot [the end that you light] is usually mild and sweet, and near the cap [the end that goes in your mouth, which is closed and needs to be cut before you light the cigar] it’s stronger and bitter.

Jaco: “You build a cigar to get a certain flavour profile.”

All the new terminology and information are enough to make your head spin, especially when you have a look at the Santa Bras website. Here, you can buy cigars – there are four kinds and you can order singles or up to five in a box – and accessories like cutters and a humidor, and there’s a wealth of information about cigars, including about Winston Churchill’s habits.

JACO FIRST LEARNT about tobacco as a young boy on a farm. “I must have been between 11 and 14 years old, and I was instantly fascinated. I first noticed the lovely colours, which ranged from yellow to dark brown. And when I got close, I was overwhelmed by the smell of the leaves – it transported me to distant islands with palm-fringed beaches.” His eyes sparkle.

He was at university when he smoked his first cigar – after he’d walked past a tobacco shop and >



Watch a demonstration

We'll post a video on our social media pages in which Jaco demonstrates how he rolls a cigar from start to finish:

[f @Platteland](#) [@myplatteland](#)



Makes you think...

The number of cigars produced globally is about 700 million per year. Compare that with the estimated 620 million cigarettes that are smoked *per hour*.



those memories from the farm had come flooding back. “I was amazed by the variety in the shop, and the aromas were so much stronger in the humidor room. I left with a box of King Edwards – by no means the best, but I could afford them and they were big enough and I was excited about the prospect of smoking my first cigar. That evening I lit the first one with shaking hands... My first taste was nothing special, but it was a new experience, and the ritual made me feel as if I’d just been admitted to a secret society of gentlemen.”

The Goncalves Petit Gordito between my fingers is smouldering nicely after Annerie and Jaco helped me to light it. “You know how a candle flame is much warmer above it than inside it?” Jaco says. “Now, that’s why you don’t hold the foot of your cigar in the flame but above it, and preferably use a long match – or four! – or a butane lighter. It takes 10 minutes, and up to four long matches, before the glow becomes visible.”

They didn’t initially have plans to start a business, they tell us later, when the ashtray is full of half-smoked cigars. “As you can see, Jaco has been rolling them for a long time,” Annerie says as her eyes sweep the room “Eventually there were just too many of them, so I said I was going to sell them. Our first trial was at a market in Hartenbos.”

That’s how it started. Who knows where it will end.

As we’re driving away from Glentana, I smell my hands, hair and clothes. There’s not a hint of that typical cigarette stench. And I think, if I’d arrived in New York from Cuba today I would have been in so much more trouble, because there would not have been two single cigars in my luggage but rather a box or three... for myself.

Contact  santabascigars.com
 annerie@santabascigars.com
 082 923 1258  Santa Bras Cigars
 @santa_bras_cigars



Cigar facts and trivia

The cap and the foot The cap is at the head of the cigar, the end that goes into your mouth, and the foot is the end that you light. (“It’s easy to remember: You won’t put your foot in your mouth.”)

Through thick and thin Cigar size refers to length and thickness. Thinner cigars are stronger. You can smoke some cigars – like a Cuban C/Gordito – in 50 minutes, whereas others will keep you busy for hours.

Pure tobacco Traditional hand-rolled cigars are made of tobacco leaves, and nothing else. A cigar has three main parts: at the core is the filler, a bunch of rolled tobacco leaves; this is rolled inside one or two binder leaves; and a wrapper leaf envelops everything. The wrapper is the most expensive leaf; it’s what a cigar smoker will notice first.

Lowering nicotine levels More than 70% of the nicotine in a tobacco leaf is found in the main vein. Santa Bras removes most of the veins in the leaves before they roll the cigars.

A skilled vocation In Cuba, it takes on average three years to qualify as a cigar roller. A good roller can produce 50–100 cigars per day.

Storing your cigars It’s best to remove the cellophane and store the cigars in a humidor, in which you can maintain their humidity so they’ll last longer. 

Weg!

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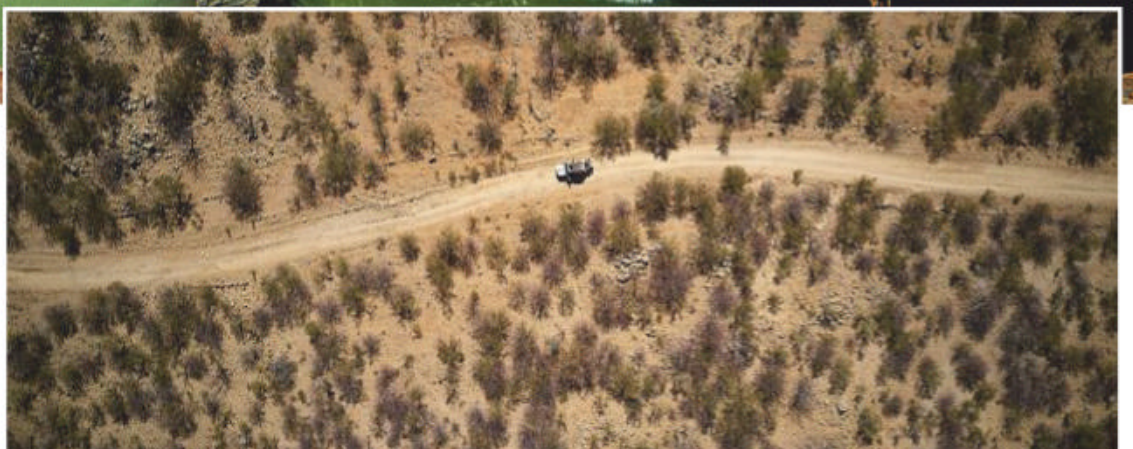
Come and get lost (in a good way) in the Kunene Region in the north-west of the country with go! and Heuningland Tours. It promises to be the trip of a lifetime

In Namibia, it often feels like you're the first person to travel through a landscape, that you've been transported to another, wilder era. If exploring the distant parts of our neighbour has always been on your travel bucket list, then the Kunene Region Photo Tour is for you.

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The tour kicks off at Spitzkoppe – home of the famous Rock Arch – and from there you'll traverse the mostly dry riverbeds of Damaraland (covered largely by what is officially called the Erongo Region) and the Kaokoveld. You'll turn around at the majestic Epupa Falls, a mere stone's throw from Angola, and drop in at Etosha on your way home.

This tour promises to be unforgettable, and the team from Heuningland will ensure that you experience the region's unique natural splendour and must-see attractions – and you'll get to take stunning photos along the way.



JOIN US ON TOUR

The best way to see an unfamiliar region is with expert guides, especially if you also want to drive 4x4 routes. Toast visited the Kunene Region with Douwe Vlok from Heuningland Tours. We have collaborated with Heuningland to offer a special photographic tour of the Kunene Region. Book your spot now!

KUNENE REGION PHOTO TOUR

WHEN? 29 May – 10 June 2023
(13 days, 12 nights)

HOW DOES IT WORK? This is a self-drive, camping tour through Damaraland, the Kaokoveld and Etosha. (Contact Heuningland for the full itinerary.)

The rate includes all meals, tents and park and concession area fees. You are responsible for fuel, camping chairs, drinks and snacks. Don't forget your camera! Toast Coetzer will be your photography guide and he'll be on hand to answer all camerarelated questions, as well as share tips.

The group size is limited to 16 people to ensure an intimate experience.

WHAT VEHICLE DO I NEED? A 4x4 with good ground clearance is essential.

RATE: R26 230 per person.



For more information and bookings, contact Heuningland.

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Down the garden path

We shine a spotlight on our country's botanical riches and botanical art, and share a few ideas for green DIY projects.

BY MAJA PALM



At Grootbos Private Nature Reserve's Hannarie Wenhold Botanical Art Gallery you can admire the remarkable detail of fynbos flowers captured in 124 botanical illustrations.

📍 GROOTBOS, Overberg

A monument to plants

The team at Grootbos Private Nature Reserve has been conserving and rehabilitating the indigenous vegetation of the Overberg coast for 24 years. Now, the reserve has introduced a world-class florilegium* – a book containing a collection of botanical art and nature observations – a first in Africa, as well as the first botanical art museum in the southern hemisphere.

With more than 922 fynbos species, Grootbos is one of the most diverse biospheres in the world.

“We live in possibly one of the most beautiful floral regions on the planet,” says Grootbos co-owner Michael Lutzeyer. “We wanted to share it with the world and get people excited about conservation, and that’s why we approached artists to paint the flowers.”

For months, 44 of the world’s best botanical artists – from the UK, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Germany, Brazil, the Netherlands, the US and, of course, South Africa – worked with botanists, entomologists and ecologists to capture the plants’ scientific and aesthetic details as precisely as possible.

These artworks have a wider scope than traditional botanical illustrations because they also depict the unique relationship between plants, their environment, pollinators and humans.

“The more you work with the plants and insects, the more you realise how important it is not to disturb anything in nature,” says Jenny Hyde-Johnson, one of the South African artists.

Three years on, Grootbos now owns 124 original artworks depicting rare, endangered and endemic fynbos found in the reserve.

When Hannarie Wenhold laid eyes on these works, she felt something so unique needed

a proper home, and that’s how the Hannarie Wenhold Botanical Art Gallery came about. The exhibition of exceptional botanical paintings has been curated in such a way that it allows visitors to experience the various seasons of Grootbos and appreciate the diversity, beauty and uniqueness of the Cape Floral Kingdom.

If you take a closer look, you’ll be amazed at the detail of the brightly coloured insects, ants gathering food, pollen floating through the air, seed pods bursting open, striped mice... And you’ll realise how unique and exceptional yet extremely vulnerable the fynbos ecosystem is.

* Florilegia were especially popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, when they served as records of rare and exotic flowering plants that affluent people collected. Find out more about botanical art at botanicalartandartists.com



CHRISTMAS STOCKING For posterity

Grootbos Florilegium is a lavish 324-page coffee-table book containing 120 original sketches of the most diverse biome on the planet, done by 44 of the world’s best botanical artists. It’ll definitely be a heirloom for any family with an appreciation for nature. You can get lost in plant stories for days on end.

Price R2 200 📞 028 384 8008

Go on a botanical expedition

Explore Grootbos on a 4x4 botanical expedition. You’ll get to visit the Hannarie Wenhold Botanical Art Gallery and enjoy a botanically inspired three-course lunch at Bellavista Country Place next door.

Meeting place, time and duration Meet at Bellavista, on the R43 between Stanford and Gansbaai, for the 4½-hour tour. Wear comfortable shoes.

Cost R950 per person

Contact 🖱 grootbos.com



Forever beautiful

“Humans have a spiritual connection with plants and flowers,” says Nicola Andrag, owner of Velt, which is known for artworks made using pressed flowers and leaves. Velt’s characteristic use of a floating metal frame – displaying the work between two sheets of glass – and a copper chain best shows off the dried flowers, mushrooms, seeds and leaves.

“That’s what I want to achieve: for people to take a moment to think deeper about nature,” Nicola says.

If you hang one of these from the ceiling, you can walk right up to it and admire it from the front and the back. And when the light shines through it, you see even more detail.

When Nicola started the business five years ago, she only used leaves and flowers. Now, she also uses



seagrasses and algae. “As I spent more time in nature, I realised every landscape on earth has unique vegetation, and I really wanted to introduce people to the finer details.”

Nicola recently completed a framed piece depicting a mushroom for a Stellenbosch woman who’d grown up in Zambia. She used leaves, mushrooms and dried hippo dung – all from Zambia – for the piece. “I adore creating this bond for people – when they look at the frame, it conjures up memories, smells and tastes from happy times.

“Each frame is part of a special moment we celebrate. Nature spends so much time and energy on creating something and, with my frames, I’m hoping to get people to appreciate that.”



Nicola Andrag,
owner of Velt



Learn from Nicola

Keep an eye on Velt’s social media accounts for schedules of flower-pressing demonstrations, meditation sessions and solo exhibitions. Nicola and her husband Heijn like to spend time in the African bush. They’re currently in the final phase of building a bush camp and establishing a wildlife preservation organisation in Zambia’s Kafue National Park. Also keep an eye on their social media for more news about the eco tours they’re planning for Zambia.

Contact velt.co.za info@velt.co.za
[f Velt](https://www.facebook.com/Velt) [@velt.co.za](https://www.instagram.com/velt.co.za)

CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Make your own pressed botanicals

Do you remember picking sweet peas as a child and pressing them between the pages of the thickest book you could find until the petals were translucent and the pages smelled of sweet pea? Well, you can experience this joy again with your own flower press. Velt’s handmade flower presses are available in three sizes: A5, A4 and A3. Each one has seven layers of pressing space, plus you get two sheets of absorbent pressing paper that you can eventually replace.

Price R700 (A5), R900 (A4), R1 200 (A3)

Contact velt.co.za



Botanical talks are online – and free!

For the past 19 years, scientists and other experts, gardeners and nature lovers have been gathering at the Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden to discuss all things environment. These days, you can attend these talks live even if you're in the Karoo or the Kalahari. That's because everything is happening online now too.

"These talks are about a large variety of topics, from botany to travel," says Cathy Abbot, who's been coordinating the RoomToGrow Wednesday Talks since 2003.

During lockdown in 2020, their in-person talks had to be cancelled. Then Struik Nature, the natural-history publisher that's a subsidiary of Penguin Random House, stepped in

and suggested the talks be presented via Zoom. They started live-streaming the talks on the platform, and it was a huge success. They are presented every second Wednesday at 10:30 am and last about 45–60 minutes. You can listen in on the Kirstenbosch or the Struik Nature Facebook page, or watch the video a day or so later on YouTube.

Topics discussed in 2022 include

South Africa's gold-medal exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show by landscape architect Leon Kluge, the diversity of insect life in South Africa by Mike Picker, the geological secrets of the Western Cape by John Rogers, mushrooms by Gary Goldman, and what happens behind the scenes at Kirstenbosch by estate manager Elton le Roux.

Price The online talks are sponsored by RoomToGrow Landscape Design and are free of charge. If you'd like to attend in person, you'll simply need to pay the Kirstenbosch entrance fee of R70.

Where? Richard Crowie Hall at Kirstenbosch; enter at Gate 2.

Contact 🖱️ sanbi.org/gardens/kirstenbosch 📺 Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden



Build your own bug hotel

Make your kids and your local bugs happy with this Gogga (Insect) Hotel Kit from the non-profit organisation Honeybee Heroes. This team of honey experts and conservationists farm sustainable honey at Willowdale Farm near Stanford in the Overberg.

The "hotel" offers a safe haven for insects that are essential for the pollination of flowers and fruit trees in your garden. Its dimensions are 23 cm x 16 cm x 14 cm, and children 5 years and older can assemble it with the help of a grown-up. It is made of untreated wood from local sustainable plantations.

Price R500

Contact 🖱️ honeybeeheroesstore.company.site



Bye-bye, mozzies and flies

This time of year there's nothing more pleasant than sitting outside in the shade of a tree, gathering around a campfire or just lolling about on the stoep when the worst of the day's heat has passed. But as soon as you put your feet up flies descend on your cheese platter and mosquitoes start buzzing around your feet. Here are three hacks from Pinterest for repelling them using herbs and lemons from your garden.

DIY I Table decoration

This is a practical plan for a table decoration, a source of light and fragrance, and a bug repellent all in one. You probably have most of what you'll need in your home.

YOU'LL NEED

- 1 orange or lemon
- a glass jar – not too deep, with quite a wide neck
- sprigs of fresh herbs – try rosemary, thyme, lavender and/or basil
- essential oil – lemon, orange, lavender, rosemary or eucalyptus works well
- a small floating candle

WHAT TO DO

Slice the lemon or orange and arrange the slices around the inside of the jar.

Twist the herb sprigs in a spiral from the bottom of the jar to the top. If you use basil sprigs, don't bother twisting them – just put them in. The idea is to create a nest for the candle.

Add 5–7 drops of your chosen essential oil to the jar.

Slowly fill the jar with water.

Carefully place the candle in the water, and light it just before your guests arrive.



DIY II Sage bundles

YOU'LL NEED

- sage stems
- cotton twine

WHAT TO DO

Cut some sage stems using secateurs – preferably common sage (*Salvia officinalis*) with its grey-green leaves.

Use the twine to tie the stems together in bundles and keep them handy when you make a campfire.

Throw a bundle in the fire every now and again – mosquitoes are repelled by the camphor and eucalyptol compounds in the sage smoke.

DIY III Star-studded lemons

YOU'LL NEED

- lemons
- whole dried cloves

WHAT TO DO

Slice the lemons in halves or quarters. Press the stalky end of the cloves into the cut surface of the lemon pieces. Place them among the food on your table to keep away flies and mosquitoes.



Nature's plan to get rid of pests

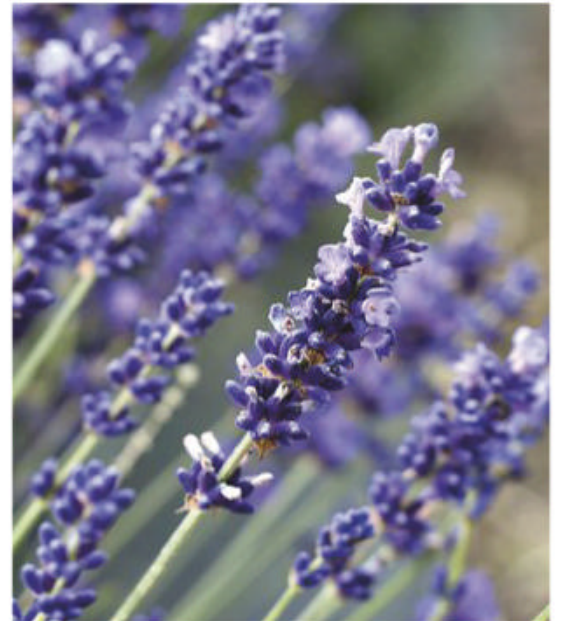
Plant these herbs in a bed or in pots near your back door, stoep or entertainment area to deter mosquitoes and flies. Why spray insecticide if you can just plant herbs?



GERANIUMS – contains geraniol



LEMONGRASS – contains citral, geraniol and linalool



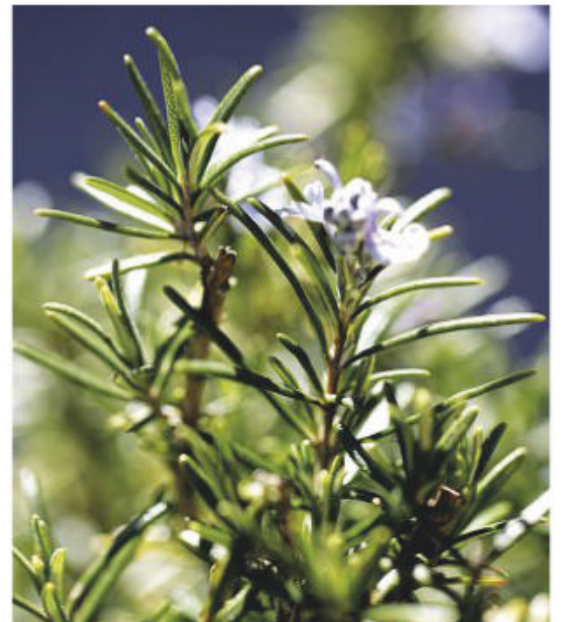
LAVENDER – contains pinene and linalool



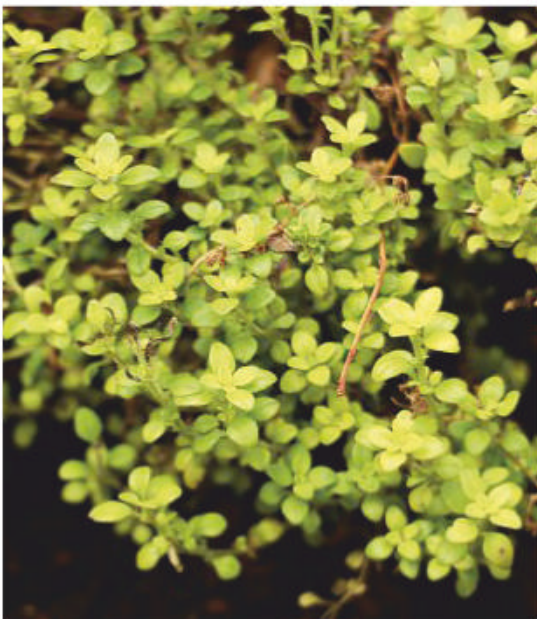
AFRICAN MARIGOLD – contains tagetone and limonene



BASIL – contains geraniol and eugenol



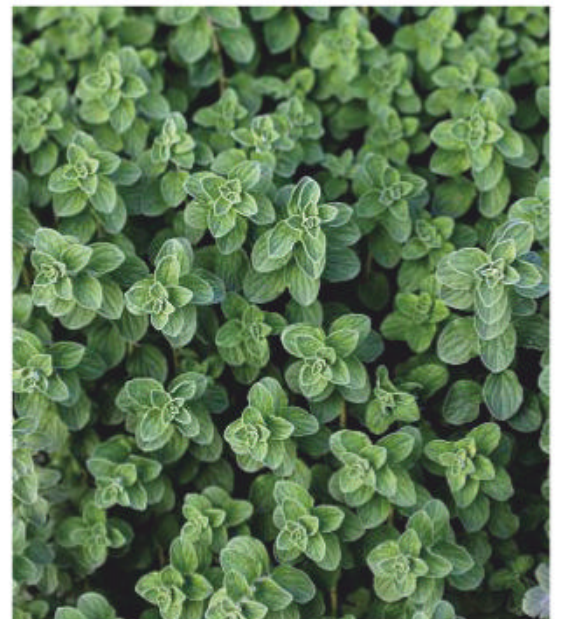
ROSEMARY – contains menthol



LEMON THYME – contains thymol



SAGE – contains camphor and 1,8-cineole (also known as eucalyptol)



ORIGANUM – contains thymol and pinene 



Lunar planting a 3-month guide

Gaye Boshoff offers advice on when and what to plant in the vegetable garden in December, January and February to help gardeners create a healthy growing cycle.

Understanding the basics

Moon phases

As the moon's gravitational pull causes the tide to rise and fall, it also affects moisture in the soil. Therefore it is said that seeds will absorb more water during the full moon and the new moon, when more moisture is pulled to the surface. This causes seeds to swell, resulting in improved germination and better-established plants. The moon also impacts plant growth through geotropism, which is how plants grow in response to gravity. Roots grow downward in the direction of the gravitational pull and stems grow in the opposite direction.

• **New moon to first quarter (waxing) – semi-fertile** This is the ideal time to plant crops that produce their seeds outside the fruit. It is most suited to sowing or transplanting leafy annuals of which we eat the leaves, as well as the flowers and the stalks in certain instances.



• **First quarter to full moon (waxing) – fertile** The success rate of seed germination increases a few days before a full moon. This phase is most suited to fruiting annuals of which we value or eat the fruit or seed-bearing part of the plant.



• **Full moon to last quarter (waning) – semi-fertile** As the moon wanes, it is beneficial to those root, tuber and bulb vegetables and herbs that rely on a strong root system, things that grow underground, plants that are decorative and fruiting perennials.



• **Last quarter to new moon (waning) – semi-barren** As the moonlight decreases night by night, plants are encouraged to grow roots, tubers and bulbs. This is not the best time to sow seed.



1 Pick your climate zone

Climate zones are the general weather conditions averaged over a series of years in a particular place. These include the average temperature, air pressure, humidity, rainfall, sunshine, cloud and wind directions throughout the year.

Winter rainfall Western Cape

Summer tropical Mpumalanga; KwaZulu-Natal Lowveld and Coast

Summer temperate Gauteng; Limpopo; Free State Highveld; KwaZulu-Natal Midlands; Eastern Cape; Little Karoo

Dry continental Western Free State; Northern Cape; North West

Dry continental Western Free State; Northern Cape; North West

2 What to plant

(S Sow | T Transplant | P Plant)

WINTER RAINFALL

Western Cape

December

Amaranth S; Basil ST; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S; Rosemary T; Sage T; Thyme ST; Watercress T
 Artichoke ST; Broccoli ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST
 Asparagus T Chillies T; Marrow S; Pumpkin S; Squash S Sweet peppers T; French beans S; Lima beans S; Maize S; Runner beans S Beetroot T; Turnips T Potato P; Sweet potato P Chives ST; Spring onion T

January

Amaranth S; Basil T; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S; Rosemary T; Sage T; Thyme T Artichoke T; Broccoli ST; Brussels sprouts ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST
 Marrow S; Pumpkin S; Squash S; Tomato ST French beans S; Lima beans S; Runner beans S Carrots S Potato P Chives ST

February

Coriander ST; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S Broccoli T; Brussels sprouts ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST Celery ST
 Tomato ST French beans S; Lima beans S Beetroot S; Carrots S Potato P Chives T; Garlic P; Spring onion ST

SUMMER TEMPERATE

Gauteng, Limpopo & Free State Highveld

December

Amaranth S; Basil ST; Kale ST; Lettuce T; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S; Rosemary T; Sage T; Thyme ST; Watercress T
 Artichoke ST; Broccoli ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST
 Asparagus T Chillies T; Cucumber S; Sweet peppers T; Tomatillo T; Tomato T French beans S; Lima beans S; Runner beans S Jerusalem artichoke P; Beetroot T Sweet potato P Chives ST; Spring onion T

January

Amaranth S; Basil T; Cabbage ST; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S; Rosemary T; Sage T; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST; Thyme T Artichoke T; Broccoli ST; Brussels sprouts ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST
 Leeks ST French beans S; Lima beans S Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Jerusalem artichoke P; Parsnip S; Turnips ST Potato T Chives ST

February

Coriander ST; Endive S; Escarole S; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST
 Broccoli ST; Brussels sprouts ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST; Echinacea S Kohlrabi ST; Leeks ST Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Jerusalem artichoke P; Parsnip S; Radish S; Turnips ST Chives T; Garlic P; Onion S; Spring onion ST

VEGETABLE & HERB SYMBOLS



LEAF vegetables or HERBS

The edible leaves of plants.



FLOWER vegetables The edible flowers of certain vegetables.



STEM vegetables The edible stalks of plants when the stalk is the main part of the vegetable.



FRUIT vegetables These are fleshy and contain seeds.



SEED vegetables The edible seeds grow in pods, some of which are also eaten (legumes).



ROOT vegetables Usually a long or round taproot.



TUBER vegetables They grow underground on the root of a plant.



BULB vegetables Consist of layers and usually grow just below the surface of the ground and produce a fleshy, leafy shoot.

SUMMER TEMPERATE

KwaZulu-Natal Midlands

December

Amaranth S; Basil ST; Kale ST; Lettuce T; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S; Rosemary T; Sage T; Thyme ST; Watercress T
 Artichoke ST; Broccoli ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower S
 Asparagus T Chillies T; Cucumber S; Sweet peppers T; Tomatillo T; Tomato T French beans S; Lima beans S; Runner beans S Beetroot ST Sweet potato P Chives ST; Spring onion T

January

Amaranth S; Basil T; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Marjoram T; Mint T; Oregano T; Rocket S; Rosemary T; Sage T; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST; Thyme T Artichoke T; Broccoli ST; Brussels sprouts ST; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST Kohlrabi ST
 French beans S; Lima beans S Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Parsnip S; Radish S; Turnips ST Chives ST >

February

 Coriander **ST**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**
 Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**; Echinacea **S**
 Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**  Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Turnips **ST**
 Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Spring onion **ST**

SUMMER TEMPERATE**Eastern Cape & Little Karoo****December**

 Amaranth **S**; Basil **ST**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **T**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **T**; Thyme **ST**  Artichoke **ST**; Broccoli **ST**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **S**  Asparagus **T**
 Chillies **T**; Cucumber **S**; Marrow **S**; Sweet peppers **T**; Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**  French beans **S**; Lima beans **S**; Maize **S**; Runner beans **S**;
 Beetroot **ST**; Radish **S**  Sweet potato **P**  Chives **ST**; Spring onion **T**

January

 Amaranth **S**; Basil **T**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **T**; Swiss chard **ST**; Thyme **T**
 Artichoke **T**; Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**  Kohlrabi **ST**
 Cucumber **S**  French beans **S**; Lima beans **S**  Beetroot **S**; Carrots **S**; Radish **S**  Potato **P**  Chives **ST**

February

 Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Swiss chard **ST**
 Broccoli **T**; Brussels sprouts **ST**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**; Echinacea **S**  Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**
 Cucumber **S**  Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Turnips **ST**  Potato **P**  Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Spring onion **ST**

SUMMER TROPICAL**Mpumalanga****December**

 Amaranth **S**; Basil **T**; Lettuce **T**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **ST**; Thyme **ST**
 Artichoke **ST**; Broccoli **ST**; Sunflower **S**  Chillies **T**; Sweet peppers **T**  Jerusalem artichoke **P**
 Sweet potato **P**  Chives **ST**

January

 Amaranth **S**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **ST**; Thyme **ST**; Watercress **ST**  Artichoke **T**; Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**  Chillies **ST**; Eggplant **S**; Sweet peppers **ST**; Tomato **ST**  Jerusalem artichoke **P**  Chives **ST**

February

 Amaranth **S**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **ST**; >

3 When to plant

Follow the guide below to time your planting according to the phases of the moon, and look out for the next instalment in *Platteland* #38, on sale from 28 February 2023.



First quarter (Wed, 30 Nov, at 16:37) to full moon (Thu, 8 Dec, at 06:08)



First quarter (Fri, 30 Dec, at 03:21) to full moon (Sat, 7 Jan, at 01:08)



Full moon (Sun, 5 Feb, at 20:29) to last quarter (Mon, 13 Feb, at 18:01)



Full moon (Thu, 8 Dec, at 06:08) to last quarter (Fri, 16 Dec, at 10:56)



Full moon (Sat, 7 Jan, at 01:08) to last quarter (Sun, 15 Jan, at 04:10)



Last quarter (Mon, 13 Feb, at 18:01) to new moon (Mon, 20 Feb, at 09:06)



Last quarter (Fri, 16 Dec, at 10:56) to new moon (Fri, 23 Dec, at 12:17)



Last quarter (Sun, 15 Jan, at 04:10) to new moon (Sat, 21 Jan, at 22:53)



New moon (Mon, 20 Feb, at 09:06) to first quarter (Mon, 27 Feb, at 10:06)



New moon (Fri, 23 Dec, at 12:17) to first quarter (Fri, 30 Dec, at 03:21)



New moon (Sat, 21 Jan, at 22:53) to first quarter (Sat, 28 Jan, at 17:19)



First quarter (Mon, 27 Feb, at 10:06) to full moon (Tue, 7 Mar, at 14:40)



First quarter (Sat, 28 Jan, at 17:19) to full moon (Sun, 5 Feb, at 20:29)

Visit honeymoonfarm.co.za to order a 2023 digital or printed full Moonbloom planting calendar.

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Show us how you
and your dogs explore
the great outdoors
and you could win
fantastic prizes with
Optimizor Elite.





Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**; Thyme **T**;
Watercress **ST** 🌿 Artichoke **T**;
Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**;
Cabbage **S**; Cauliflower **ST**
🍅 Chillies **ST**; Cucumber **S**;
Eggplant **ST**; Marrow **S**; Pumpkin **S**;
Squash **S**; Sweet peppers **ST**;
Tomato **ST** 🍆 French beans **S**;
Lima beans **S**; Runner beans **S**
🥕 Beetroot **S**; Carrots **S**; Jerusalem
artichoke **P**; Radish **S**; Turnips **ST**
🌱 Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Onion **S**

SUMMER TROPICAL

KwaZulu-Natal Lowveld & Coast

December

🌿 Amaranth **S**; Basil **T**; Lettuce **T**;
Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**;
Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **ST**;
Thyme **ST** 🌿 Artichoke **ST**; Broccoli **ST**;
Sunflower **S** 🍅 Chillies **T**; Sweet
peppers **T** 🌱 Chives **ST**

January

🌿 Amaranth **S**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**;
Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**;
Rosemary **T**; Sage **ST**; Thyme **ST**;
Watercress **ST** 🌿 Artichoke **T**;
Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**;

Cauliflower **ST** 🍅 Chillies **ST**;
Eggplant **S**; Sweet peppers **ST**;
Tomato **ST** 🌱 Chives **ST**

February

🌿 Amaranth **S**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**;
Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**;
Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **ST**;
Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**; Thyme **T**;
Watercress **ST** 🌿 Artichoke **T**;
Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**;
Cabbage **S**; Cauliflower **ST**
🍅 Chillies **ST**; Cucumber **S**;
Eggplant **ST**; Marrow **S**; Pumpkin **S**;
Squash **S**; Sweet peppers **ST**;
Tomato **ST** 🍆 French beans **S**;
Lima beans **S**; Runner beans **S**
🥕 Beetroot **S**; Carrots **S**; Radish **S**;
Turnips **ST** 🌱 Chives **T**; Garlic **P**

DRY CONTINENTAL

Western Free State, Northern Cape & North West

December

🌿 Amaranth **S**; Basil **ST**; Kale **ST**;
Lettuce **T**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**;
Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**;
Sage **T**; Thyme **ST**; Watercress **T**
🌿 Artichoke **ST**; Broccoli **ST**;

Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**
🌿 Asparagus **T** 🍅 Chillies **T**;
Cucumber **S**; Sweet peppers **T**;
Tomatillo **T**; Tomato **T** 🍆 French
beans **S**; Lima beans **S**; Runner beans **S**
🥕 Beetroot **T**; Radish **S** 🍠 Sweet
potato **P** 🌱 Chives **ST**; Spring onion **T**

January

🌿 Amaranth **S**; Basil **T**; Kale **ST**;
Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**;
Oregano **T**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**;
Sage **T**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**;
Thyme **T** 🌿 Artichoke **T**; Broccoli **ST**;
Brussels sprouts **ST**; Cabbage **ST**;
Cauliflower **ST** 🌿 Leeks **ST** 🍆 French
beans **S**; Lima beans **S** 🥕 Carrots **S**;
Parsnip **S**; Turnips **ST** 🍠 Potato **P**;
Sweet potato **P** 🌱 Chives **ST**

February

🌿 Coriander **ST**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**;
Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**;
Rocket **S**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**
🌿 Broccoli **ST**; Brussels sprouts **ST**;
Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**; Echinacea **S**
🌿 Leeks **ST** 🥕 Beetroot **S**; Carrots **S**;
Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Turnips **ST**
🍠 Potato **P** 🌱 Chives **T**; Garlic **P**;
Onion **S**; Spring onion **ST** **P**

via.
Regtig. Egtig.

DStv
kanaal 147
Kyk ook op Catch Up

AFGRI

Landbouweekliks

Merkwaardige boere se buitengewone stories
VIA plaaskuiers met Theodore, Vicky en Pietman
via. – Regte mense. Regte stories.

Dinsdae 17:30

Donderdae 18:30



A man wearing a straw hat, a patterned short-sleeved shirt, and khaki shorts is planting seedlings into a raised wooden planter box. The planter box is made of light-colored wood and contains several black plastic trays filled with soil and young plants. A grey mesh cover is propped open behind the planter box. The scene is outdoors, with trees and bushes in the background and a dirt path in the foreground.

Make a raised planter box for summer

This planter box* is just the thing for summer, especially in the hotter parts of our country. You use plastic stacking crates – no water-logged roots! – and a cover that protects plants from the sun and the wind, as well as birds and bugs.

BY ZIGI EKRON PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD

Zigi says...

This raised planter box with crates is a great solution if you'd like to have your own small kitchen garden that's protected against the elements. Garden chores are easier because you don't have to bend or kneel, and you can move the planter if necessary. Gardening is supposed to be a relaxing pastime!



* Our DIY planter box is a replica of one we saw in Adriaan and Louize Mocke's lovely garden in Swellendam.

Get everything ready

SHOPPING LIST

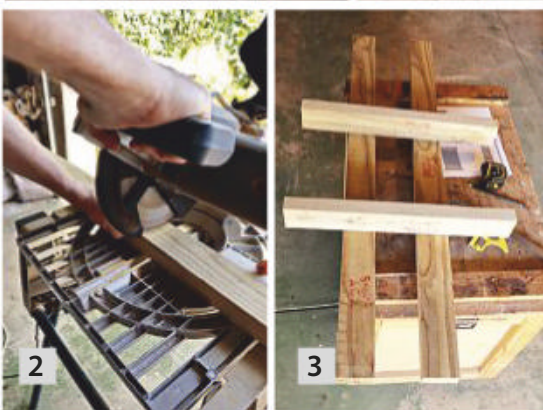
- Five 38 mm-thick x 76 mm-wide x 3 m-long **treated pine planks** (R375)
- Three 350 mm x 530 mm x 290 mm **plastic stacking crates** with vented sides and base for drainage (R70 each at Mambo's = R210)
- One packet (60) of 4 x 75 mm **screws** (R30)
- Four 4 x 20 mm **screws** (R4)
- Eight 8 x 75 mm **self-tapping bolts with washers** (R16)
- 6 m length of 25 mm **PVC conduit pipe** (R75)
- Seven 25 mm **PVC 90-degree elbows** (R30)
- Six 25 mm **PVC tees** (R42)
- Two 25 mm **PVC saddles** (R3)
- 1 m-long x 1,75 m-wide **40% shade netting** (R100)
- One packet (100) of **cable ties** – ours were 150 mm x 3,5 mm (R45)

TOOLS

- measuring tape
- try square
- saw
- clamps
- drill and 3 mm and 8 mm drill bits
- screwdriver
- spanner set or gear sockets
- cold glue
- PVC adhesive

R Approximate cost of materials: **R930**
(All prices are rounded off to the nearest rand)

This is how

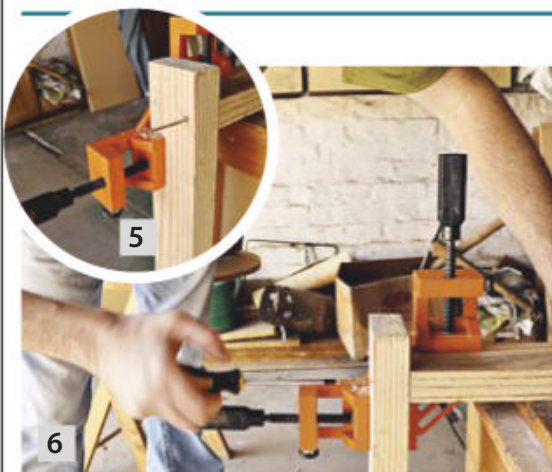


A Make the stand Cut two lengths of pine that are 1,125 m long and two lengths that are 682 mm long. **1 2 3** On the broad side of the two shorter lengths of pine, measure 38 mm from each end and draw a pencil line across. **4** Glue the ends of one long length of pine and clamp them to the inner side of these



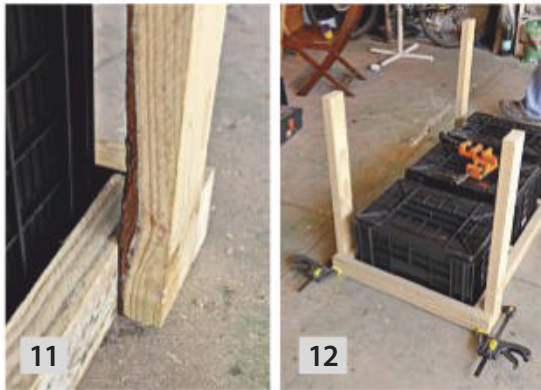
lines. Use a 3 mm drill bit to drill pilot holes and screw the planks together. **5 6**

TIP Drill the pilot holes far enough apart so that the bigger bolt will fit in between them later.



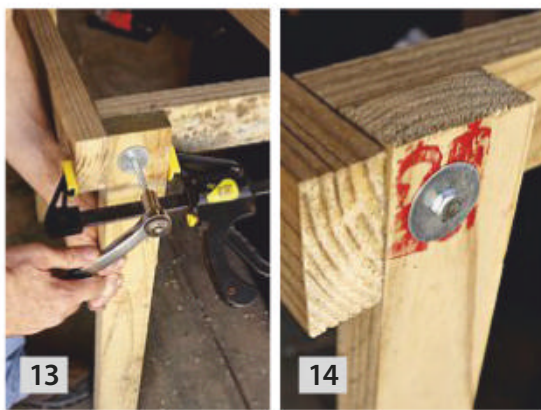
Cut two 530 mm lengths of pine. Space them 350 mm apart on the inside of the frame you have made, or simply use a crate to determine the positions. **7 8** Glue the ends of these two planks, drill pilot holes in them and screw them down. **9 10** >





Cut four 750 mm lengths of pine for the legs of your stand. Put the frame upside down on the floor and position each leg in the outer corner of the frame where the short sides exceed the long sides. Clamp the legs in place. **11 12**

TIP If you clamp the legs really tightly, you should be able to turn the frame right side up to make the next step easier.



Using the 8 mm drill bit, drill a pilot hole and screw each leg to the frame with an 8 x 75 mm bolt and a washer. **13 14** Turn the frame upside down once more and place the crates in position with the open sides facing down. **15** The crates have a lip around the lower edge so they can be stacked securely; on our crates, this lip is exactly 20 mm deep and 20 mm wide. Our plan is to place the crates into the frame to rest on this lip – that way, none of the drainage holes will be blocked by the wood, and no water will run over the frame. **16**



Cut two more 1,125 m lengths of pine and two 682 mm lengths. Along the narrow side of your frame, measure 405 mm from the lower side of each leg and draw a line across. Now glue and clamp the shorter lengths of wood (682 mm) to the legs so that the upper edge of each plank (in other words, the lower edge once you have turned over the stand onto its legs) aligns with your pencil marking. **17**



Drill pilot holes and screw the planks to the legs. **18 19**



Glue the ends of the two longer lengths of wood and position them in between these planks so that the narrow sides rest on the lips of the upturned crates. They should



align at the top and bottom with the planks you have just screwed down. **20 21** Drill pilot holes and screw the long planks to the cross-planks. **22**



Now cut two 350 mm lengths of wood. Glue the ends and position them in between the legs so that the wide sides rest on the long planks you've just screwed down. **23**



Clamp these planks in position, drill pilot holes for the 8 mm bolts in them and screw them to the legs – they will carry the weight of the crates. **24 25**



Turn the stand onto its legs. The crates should fit into position snugly and rest securely on the frame. **26 27** You should still be able to remove the crates and put them back easily.



B Make the cover Cut four 470 mm lengths of PVC pipe and four 45 mm lengths. Join the longer pieces straight in pairs using a tee in the centre, and attach another tee at each end. Use the 45 mm lengths of pipe to attach an elbow to each of the outer tees. **28**

TIP Do not apply glue to anything yet.

Now cut two 530 mm lengths and insert the ends into the open side of each elbow so that you have a rectangular PVC frame.

Now is your chance to make your St 6 maths teacher proud. The apex of the cover will be a 90-degree elbow too. So, to determine the lengths of the sides of your cover, you have to use the Pythagorean theorem. Do you still remember it? “In a right-angled triangle, the square of the hypotenuse side equals the sum of squares of the other two sides.”

Thus:

$$530^2 = 280\,900$$

$$280\,900 \div 2 = 140\,450$$

$$\sqrt{140\,450} = 374,76$$



So, cut six 375 mm lengths of PVC pipe. (Yes, we could have said that right from the start, but we just wanted to show off our maths skills.) Insert two of these lengths into each of your remaining elbows and position the other ends in the openings of the tees on your PVC frame. **29 30**



Once all the pieces fit, glue the joints with PVC adhesive. **31**



Place the two saddles over one long side of the PVC frame so they correspond with the cross-planks on either side of the crate in the middle. Screw them in place with the 20 mm screws. The PVC frame will now hinge on the one side of the planter box so you can lift the cover when you need to work inside it. **32 33**



All that's left to do is to attach the shade netting to the PVC frame. Ask someone to give you a hand with this – preferably a person who is good at wrapping gifts or making a bed with neat hospital corners. **34** The shade netting is slightly elastic, so pull it quite taut to stretch it evenly. Fold and cut off excess netting, and use cable ties to secure the net to the PVC frame. **P**

ISABELLA'S WEST COAST TABLE



Spread the love

Set a long table and spoil your tribe over the holidays with this simple, flavourful feast put together specially for *Platteland* by West Coast cook **Isabella Niehaus**.

RECIPES AND STYLING **ISABELLA NIEHAUS** PHOTOS **YVETTE JORDAAN** FOOD ASSISTANT **DIDI STOLS**



Mena

- STARTERS -

Olives and blueberries
.....
Hummus with garlic confit
and olive oil crackers
.....

- MAINS -

Coq au vin blanc
(the most delicious chicken
cooked in white wine)
.....
Pumpkin tart with
caramel sauce
.....

- DESSERT -

Chocolate cake
with compote and
crème fraîche
.....

Olives and blueberries

Believe it or not, but salty olives and sweet blueberries are a winning combination as a snack; they're as moreish as nuts or peanuts. Grapes and gooseberries go equally well with olives.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **5 minutes plus 1–2 days' marinating time**

YOU NEED

- 2 cups(500 ml) good-quality olives, drained
- 1 cup (250 ml) fresh blueberries
- ½ cup (125 ml) good-quality olive oil
- 1–2 tablespoons (15–30 ml) fresh rosemary needles or thyme leaves

THIS IS HOW

Place the olives in a bowl and add the blueberries, olive oil and rosemary needles (or thyme leaves). Mix the ingredients gently using your hands, making sure the herb is distributed evenly. Prepare this mixture a day or two ahead and leave it in the fridge or in a cool spot in your home to marinate before you serve it.



Hummus with garlic confit and olive oil crackers

This is without a doubt one of the tastiest hummus recipes I've ever come across, even though it requires a bit more effort than simply opening a tin of chickpeas.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **20–30 minutes**,
plus soaking time

Cooking time **1–2 hours**

YOU NEED

FOR THE HUMMUS

- 2 cups (500 ml) dried chickpeas or 2 x 400 g tins, drained
- zest and juice of 1 lemon
- ¼ cup (60 ml) tahini
- a sprinkling of ground cumin
- 2–3 ice cubes (to ensure a creamier texture) or about ¼ cup (60 ml) ice-cold water
- a drizzle of olive oil, to garnish
- smoked or sweet paprika, to garnish
- fresh parsley, chopped, to garnish

FOR THE GARLIC CONFIT

- 1–1½ cups (250–375 ml) extra-virgin olive oil
- 8–10 garlic cloves, peeled

FOR THE OLIVE OIL CRACKERS

- 1½ cups (250 g) cake wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) baking powder
- 25 g sesame seeds
- 50 ml extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup (125 ml) water
- salt flakes, for sprinkling

THIS IS HOW

Soak and cook the chickpeas Place the chickpeas in a large glass bowl and fill it with enough water to cover them by at least 10 cm. Leave to soak for at least 12 hours. Drain the water from the bowl and rinse the chickpeas, picking out any skins that may have come off.

Place the chickpeas in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil, then reduce to a low heat and simmer for 1–2 hours, until the chickpeas can easily be mashed with a fork or between your

fingers. Rinse the chickpeas very well under cold water and rub them between your fingers to loosen the outer skins. Rinse using a colander or a sieve, and remove the skins. You may have to do this a few times.

Make the garlic confit Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over really low heat and add the peeled garlic cloves. Simmer for 20–25 minutes, or until the garlic is soft – it should not caramelize. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. Reserve the oil for the hummus.

Make the olive oil crackers Combine the cake wheat flour, baking powder and sesame seeds in a bowl, then add the olive oil and water. Mix using a fork initially, then knead the mixture with your hands.

Dust a clean work surface with a little cake wheat flour and knead the dough until it forms a ball with a moist consistency – add a little more water if the dough is too dry. Cover with a tea towel and place in the fridge to chill for 1 hour.

Meanwhile, heat the oven to 220°C.

Take the dough out of the fridge and break off pieces the size of a R5 coin. Using a rolling pin, roll each piece out into a paper-thin sheet and place it on a baking sheet. Brush the dough with a little water or olive oil and sprinkle salt over. Bake for 5–6 minutes, until golden brown. Alternatively, roll the dough out into a rectangle and slice it into squares before baking the crackers.

Make the hummus Place the chickpeas, lemon zest, lemon juice, tahini, cumin, a generous pinch of salt and the garlic confit in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until mostly combined and smooth. Begin to drizzle in the garlic confit oil start, with the processor still running, and add one ice cube at a time until the desired consistency is achieved.

Spoon the hummus into a bowl or onto a platter. Garnish with olive oil, a sprinkling of paprika and chopped parsley.

Serve the hummus with the olive oil crackers or crudité.



Coq au vin blanc

I adore the traditional French chicken in red wine, but this version cooked in white wine is currently my favourite chicken recipe.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **20 minutes**

Cooking time **1 hour**

YOU NEED

FOR THE CHICKEN

- 1 whole chicken, cut into eight pieces
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) butter
- 120 g streaky bacon, sliced into 1 cm-thick matchsticks
- 1 onion, peeled and diced
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and chopped finely
- 1–2 carrots (about 250 g), sliced into 2,5 cm-thick rounds
- ¼ cup (60 ml) brandy or Cognac
- ½ bottle (375 ml) dry white wine
- 1 cup (250 ml) chicken stock
- 8 sprigs thyme
- samp or samp risotto, cauliflower or potato mash, or white rice infused with a bay leaf, to serve

FOR THE MUSHROOMS

- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) butter
- 250 g whole button mushrooms
- 6–8 pearl onions or small shallots, peeled
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) cake wheat flour

THIS IS HOW

Season the chicken At least 2 hours before you start cooking, rinse the chicken pieces thoroughly and pat them with paper towel to remove any excess moisture. Season with salt and pepper on both sides – be generous and make sure to get inside all the nooks and crannies. Set aside to reach near room temperature. You can prep your veggies (carrots, onions and so forth) in the meantime.

Cook the chicken Move the oven rack to the centre position and preheat the oven to 180°C.

In a large heavy-based oven-safe pan on the stovetop, melt the butter and cook the bacon matchsticks over medium heat for 7–8 minutes or until

crispy. Transfer the bacon to a plate; do not wash the pan.

Place the chicken pieces in the same pan and cook for 5 minutes on each side or until the skin is golden. Set aside with the bacon; do not wash the pan.

Place the onion, garlic and carrot in the pan and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally with a wooden spoon, until lightly caramelised. Pour in the brandy, chicken stock and wine, and stir to combine – make sure to scrape off the bits from the bottom of the pan. Return the chicken pieces to the pan and top with the bacon and sprigs of thyme. Bring to a simmer, cover with a lid and place in the oven. Cook for 30 minutes, until the chicken is cooked

through and no longer pink in the centre.

Cook the mushrooms While the chicken is cooking in the oven, melt 1 tablespoon (15 ml) of the butter in a pan over medium heat and sauté the mushrooms and pearl onions (or shallots) for about 10 minutes. Set aside; do not wash the pan.

In a small bowl, mash the remaining butter and the flour. Add the mixture to the pan and stir using a fork (lumps may form at first, but they will dissolve as you stir). Add the pearl onions (or shallots) and mushrooms, and simmer over medium heat for about 10 minutes to allow the sauce to thicken slightly. Serve the chicken and mushrooms with samp, cauliflower or potato mash, or white rice.



Pumpkin tart with caramel sauce

The caramel sauce brings this wonderful pumpkin tart to the next level. Lace the sauce with vanilla essence or – don't be alarmed now – add a dash of fish sauce to lend it an amazing umami flavour.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **10 minutes**

Baking time **1 hour**

YOU NEED

FOR THE PUMPKIN TART

- ½ cup (125 ml) sugar
- 160 g butter, softened
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup (250 ml) cake wheat flour
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) salt

- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) baking powder
- 1 cup (250 ml) milk
- 1 cup (250 ml) cream
- 3½ cups (875 ml) cooked pumpkin or butternut, mashed

FOR THE CARAMEL SAUCE

- ½ cup (125 ml) sugar
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) butter
- ½ cup (125 ml) golden syrup
- 1 cup (250 ml) room
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla essence or 1–2 teaspoons (5–10 ml) fish sauce

THIS IS HOW

Make the pumpkin tart Heat the oven to 160°C and grease an ovenproof dish thoroughly with butter. Beat the sugar,

butter and eggs until well combined. Add the cake wheat flour, salt and baking powder; mix through. Stir in the milk and cream. Add the cooked pumpkin or butternut and mix using a spatula until well combined.

Pour the batter into the prepared dish and bake it for 1 hour. Allow it to cool before slicing – it is delicious cold or at room temperature, but you can always reheat it gently before serving it with the caramel sauce.

Make the caramel sauce Melt the sugar and butter over moderate heat while stirring continuously. Add the golden syrup, followed by the cream. Stir in the vanilla essence or fish sauce just before serving it warm with the tart.





Chocolate cake with compote and crème fraîche

Make this easy no-bake cake a day in advance.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **20 minutes**

Cooking time **15–20 minutes**
(compote)

YOU NEED

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CAKE

- 400 g dark chocolate, broken into pieces (I prefer Bournville)
- 200 g butter
- ¼ cup (60 ml) dark cocoa powder
- 4 egg yolks
- ¼ cup (60 ml) brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) brandy or liqueur of your choice
- 12–14 Tennis biscuits, broken into pieces

FOR THE COMPOTE

- 1 cup (250 ml) fruit or berries of your choice – we used kumquats
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lemon juice
- 1–2 tablespoons (15–30 ml) water
- 1 vanilla pod or cinnamon stick
- crème fraîche, to serve

THIS IS HOW

Make the chocolate cake Line a bread tin or a 23 cm x 10 cm glass dish with cling film.

Melt the chocolate pieces in a double boiler and stir in the butter and cocoa powder. Beat together the egg yolks, sugar, brandy (or liqueur) and salt to taste until light and fluffy. Add this mixture to the slightly cooled chocolate mixture and stir. Then carefully fold in the biscuit pieces and spoon the mixture into the prepared tin or dish. Cover with cling film and place in the fridge to chill for 24 hours.

Make the compote Place all the ingredients in a saucepan over moderate heat and allow to simmer for 15–20 minutes. It will thicken as it cools.

Serve the cake with a spoonful of compote and crème fraîche.

Meet the chef

Former fashion editor Isabella Niehaus lives in Langebaan, where she has been hosting lunches at her home, called the Duinhuis, for a few years. The sea usually takes pride of place on every plate at these popular gatherings. Her internationally acclaimed cookbook *Duinhuis* saw the light in 2019, followed by the e-cookbooks *Isabella's Mussel Feast* and *Isabella's Pork Feast*. Visit her website to find out more or to order her books or items from her fashion range Lap. isabellaniehaus.co.za



Buy the book

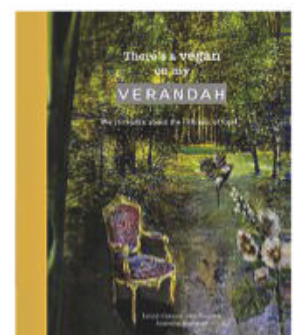
Isabella is the co-author and alchemist of the new cookbook *There's a Vegan on My Verandah*, which she produced alongside artist and writer Louis Jansen van Vuuren. Louis has been a vegan for the past seven years. As one would expect of these two creatives, the book is gorgeous. It features lovely photographs by Yvette Jordaan and plant-based recipes that showcase the creative and nutritious possibilities when you cook using ingredients from a simple kitchen garden. In between the recipes, Isabella and Louis share stories and food memories, as well as practical tips such as vegan pantry basics and an array of replacement options for eggs in recipes.

The self-published book costs R517,50 (R450 plus VAT) plus R60 for delivery. Order a copy by sending an email to carel@cnandco.com or bellaniehaus24@gmail.com

Win

We are giving away one copy of *There's a Vegan on My Verandah*. Send an email with your

name, physical address and telephone number to helloplatteland@gmail.com with the phrase "Summer Vegan" in the subject line. The closing date is 24 February 2023. **P**



INA'S SUMMER FEAST

Take it

easy

Start a new tradition this year with Ina Paarman's summery festive menu, which can be prepared ahead to sidestep most of the fuss. Because we'd all much rather relax with loved ones than slave over a hot stove!

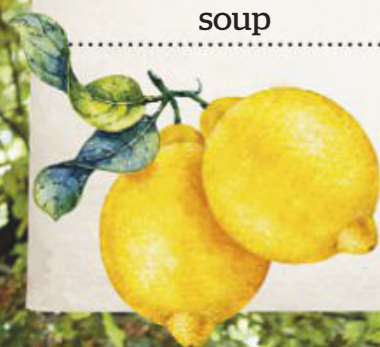
RECIPES AND STYLING INA PAARMAN PHOTOS MICKY HOYLE



MENU

- STARTER -

Chilled beetroot
soup



- MAIN COURSE -

Moroccan chicken pie
Eggplant involtini
Roasted pepper salad
Minty summer salad
with yoghurt dressing
(optional, recipe
on page 137)

- DESSERT -

Chocolate tart with
mixed berries

- FOR LATER -

Last-minute
Christmas cake



Chilled beetroot soup

This light soup is the perfect vegetarian option. We love the recipe for its vibrant colour and robust flavour. You can prepare the soup in advance and serve it hot or cold.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **15 minutes**

Cooking time **1 hour**

YOU NEED

- 1 large onion, chopped finely
- ½ teaspoon (2,5 ml) Ina Paarman's Green Onion Seasoning
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) canola oil
- 4–5 medium beetroots, scrubbed
- 2 large carrots, scrubbed and chopped coarsely
- 3 celery sticks, sliced
- 6 cups (1,5 l) hot water
- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) Ina Paarman's Chicken Flavour or Vegetable Stock Powder
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) sugar
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) lemon juice
- 3 ripe tomatoes, chopped
- ½ cup (125 ml) sour cream (optional)
- edible flowers or chives, to garnish

THIS IS HOW

Season the onion with Green Onion Seasoning and sauté it in the oil for 10 minutes, until soft and beginning to brown. (Don't rush this step – the onion contributes to the flavour of the soup).

Chop off the root and stem ends of the beetroots, then chop them coarsely.

Add the beetroot, carrot and celery to the pan. Sauté to develop the flavours of the vegetables; it will take about 3 minutes. Add the hot water, Stock Powder, sugar and lemon juice. Cover with a lid and simmer for 30–35 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and cook for a further 10 minutes. Liquidise until smooth. Taste for seasoning.

Ladle into soup plates, add a spoonful of sour cream to each serving and swirl it through the soup, and garnish with edible flowers or chives.



Ina's tip

Scrub vegetables using a brush or a clean scouring sponge that you keep for this purpose only.

The woman behind the brand

Ina Paarman needs no introduction. Paarman Foods, her spice, condiment and bakery empire, is one of South Africa's most recognised brands. The products are exported to about 32 countries. The secret? They use only the freshest ingredients sourced from local farms, and prepare the products like one would at home, only on a larger scale. Rather than artificial additives, they rely on pasteurisation and sterilisation to keep products shelf-stable. To find out more or to shop online, visit [paarman.co.za](https://www.paarman.co.za)



Moroccan chicken pie with feta and artichokes

This has been one of our most popular recipes for special occasions. I often serve it at a dinner party because it looks so glamorous and everyone loves the flavours! Our home economist Janet Hacking and I did a cooking course in Morocco in 2006 and enjoyed every minute of it. This is one of the recipes we made.

Serves **6**

Preparation time **1 hour**

Cooking & baking time **1 hour and 50–55 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) canola oil
- 8 chicken thighs on the bone, skin on
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) Ina Paarman's Seasoned Sea Salt
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) ground turmeric
- 1 cup (250 ml) hot water
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) Ina Paarman's Chicken Flavour Stock Powder
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) butter
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- Ina Paarman's Green Onion Seasoning
- 200 g feta, drained and crumbled
- 3 eggs, hard-boiled and chopped coarsely
- ¼ cup (60 ml) fresh parsley, chopped
- ¼ cup (60 ml) fresh coriander, chopped
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) Ina Paarman's White Sauce Powder
- 8 sheets phyllo pastry
- 100 g butter, melted
- 1 x 280 g jar artichoke hearts, drained and halved
- edible gold shimmer dust

THIS IS HOW

Pour 2 tablespoons (30 ml) of the canola oil into a large, heavy-based saucepan. Season the chicken thighs with Seasoned Sea Salt. Place them in a single layer in the pan and brown on all sides. Mix the ground cumin,

cinnamon and turmeric, and dust the thighs with this spice mixture before turning them in the pan. Cook briefly – only long enough for the spice flavours to develop. Add the hot water and Chicken Flavour Stock Powder. Turn the chicken skin side down. Cover the saucepan and simmer gently for about 1¼ hours, until the chicken is really tender. Turn the chicken skin side up and allow to cool in the stock.

Heat the butter and the remaining 2 tablespoons (30 ml) canola oil in a heavy-based frying pan. Add the onion and season lightly with Green Onion Seasoning. Sauté the onion until soft and lightly browned. Be patient – it will take 10–15 minutes. Browning the onion properly is one of the secrets to this dish.

Remove the pan from the heat. Remove the chicken from the stock and reserve the stock. Strip off the meat (with the grain) into long thin strips and discard the skin and bones. Add the meat to the browned onion. Add the feta, chopped egg and fresh herbs.

Heat the stock, whisk the White Sauce Powder into it, and then add the sauce to the chicken mixture. Taste for seasoning and add Seasoned Sea Salt if necessary.

Carefully unroll the phyllo pastry. Keep it covered with a damp tea towel to prevent it from drying out. Brush one sheet of phyllo with melted butter and line a 25 cm ovenproof dish with it, leaving the pastry edges to hang over the sides. Turn the dish slightly clockwise. Repeat with three more buttered sheets of pastry, turning the dish every time.

Spoon the filling into the dish, then arrange the artichoke halves on top of the filling. Fold the overhanging phyllo pastry back over the filling.

Butter another sheet of phyllo and tent it on top of the pie. Repeat with the final sheets of pastry. All this preparation can be done in advance: the pie can be kept refrigerated for a day or two, or frozen for a month.

Adjust the oven rack to the centre position and heat the oven to 180°C.

Bake the pie for 35–40 minutes. A frozen pie must be defrosted before baking – this will take at least 15 minutes longer. If the top browns too quickly, cover it with baking paper or foil. When the pie comes out of the oven dust it lightly with gold shimmer dust for a touch of glamour!





Eggplant involtini

Select large eggplants to make these stuffed eggplant rolls in tomato sauce. They are utterly delectable served with crusty bread and a salad. It is one of our very best recipes and ideal for a vegetarian meal. You can make it beforehand and reheat it with the chicken pie.

Serves **4**

Preparation time **20 minutes**

Cooking time **55–70 minutes**

YOU NEED

- **4 large eggplants, cut lengthwise into 1 cm-thick slices**
- **olive oil**
- **Ina Paarman's Garlic & Herb Seasoning**
- **1 x 125 g Ina Paarman's Basil Pesto**
- **⅓ cup (80 ml) fresh white breadcrumbs**
- **½ teaspoon (2,5 ml) Ina Paarman's Chilli & Garlic Seasoning**
- **250 g full-cream chunky cottage cheese**
- **½ cup (125 ml) grated Italian hard cheese**
- **1 x 400 g Ina Paarman's Tomato & Basil or Roast Pepper Pasta Sauce (shake out the jar with ¼ cup water [60 ml] to dislodge any residue)**

THIS IS HOW

Adjust the oven rack to the centre position and heat the oven to 200°C.

Arrange the eggplant slices on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Season the slices very lightly, on one side only, with Garlic & Herb Seasoning and generously drizzle olive oil over. Bake for 35–40 minutes, until nicely browned (there's no need to turn them). Remove tray from the oven and lower the temperature to 180°C.

Turn the slices over and spread each underside with Basil Pesto. Mix the breadcrumbs, Chilli & Garlic Seasoning, cottage cheese and half of the grated cheese to form a firm paste. With the widest end of an eggplant slice facing you, place a generous tablespoon of the cheese mixture on the wide third of each eggplant slice. Roll it up. Repeat with the rest of the eggplant slices and cheese mixture.

Decant the Pasta Sauce into a medium ovenproof dish or divide it among 4 individual dishes. Arrange the eggplant rolls, seam side down, in the sauce. Top with the remaining grated cheese. Bake for 25–30 minutes, until golden.

Serve with an Italian-style bread brushed with olive oil to mop up the sauce.

Roasted pepper salad

The vibrant colour of this salad is guaranteed to delight the eye. It is a delicious vegetarian main course or a side dish served with meat. Any leftovers will keep covered in the fridge for three days.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **10 minutes**

Cooking time **25 minutes**

YOU NEED

- **6 red and/or orange peppers**
- **Ina Paarman's Garlic Pepper Seasoning**
- **6–8 thyme sprigs, leaves picked, plus extra for garnish**
- **2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced**
- **3 tablespoons (45 ml) olive oil**
- **200 g baby tomatoes, halved**
- **2 tablespoons (30 ml) Ina Paarman's Classic Balsamic Vinaigrette**
- **10–12 caperberries (optional)**

THIS IS HOW

Adjust the oven rack to one slot above the centre position and heat the oven to 200°C. Halve the peppers lengthwise and scrape out the seeds. Place the pepper halves on a baking tray, cut sides up, and season with Garlic Pepper Seasoning. Scatter the thyme leaves and garlic over. Drizzle olive oil over, then fill each pepper half with halved baby tomatoes.

Roast for about 25 minutes or until the peppers have shrunk a little and are charring at the edges. Remove the tray from the oven.

Drizzle Classic Balsamic Vinaigrette over the salad and scatter over the caperberries, if using, as well as the extra thyme. Serve at room temperature or chilled.





Chocolate tart with mixed berries

You can make this tart a day or two before it is needed – keep it covered with cling film in the fridge and top with berries before serving. If you have a loose-bottomed flan tin, use it to make this tart. The pecan crust will crisp up beautifully and complement the tart perfectly. We added Amarula Cream Liqueur to the mousse, but feel free to replace it with the same amount of cold strong black coffee. Other liqueurs that would work well are Kahlúa, Frangelico, Cointreau or Grand Marnier.

Serves **6–8**

Preparation time **20 minutes plus**

4 hours or overnight refrigeration

Baking time **15 minutes**

YOU NEED

FOR THE PECAN CRUST

- 1 cup (100 g) pecan nuts
- 11 Tennis biscuits
- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) soft brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon (2,5 ml) ground cinnamon
- 5 tablespoons (75 ml) melted butter

FOR THE MOUSSE FILLING

- ½ cup (125 ml) Amarula Cream Liqueur or cold strong coffee
- ½ cup (125 ml) water
- 1 x 310 g Ina Paarman's Chocolate Mousse Mix
- 1 cup (250 ml) fresh cream
- fresh blueberries, blackberries and raspberries, to garnish

THIS IS HOW

Make the pecan crust Adjust the oven rack to the centre position and heat the oven to 170°C.

Chop the pecans and the Tennis biscuits in a food processor until finely

crumbed. Add the sugar, cinnamon and melted butter. Process until well blended.

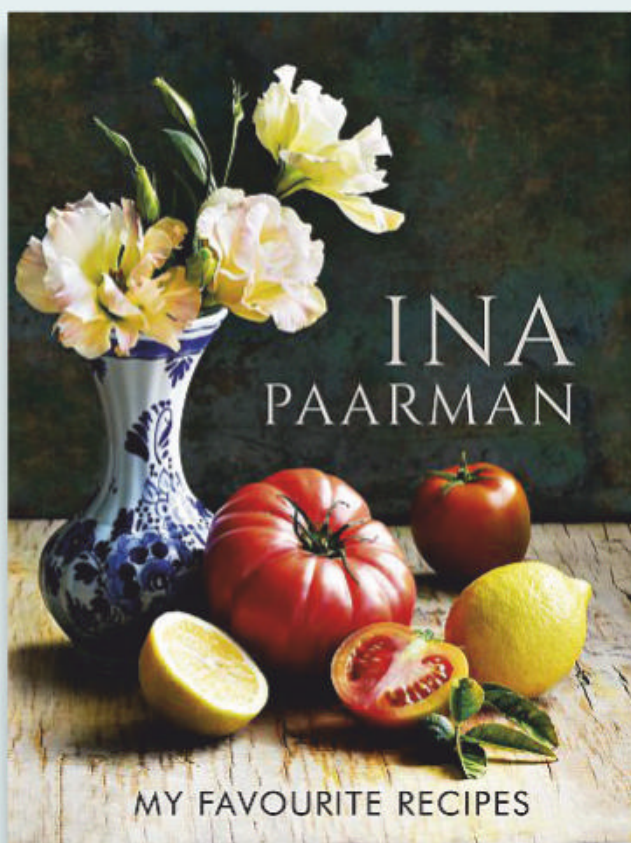
Press the mixture onto the base and up the sides of a 22 cm–23 cm loose-bottomed flan tin. Bake for 15 minutes, until golden and crispy. Leave to cool, then place in the freezer to firm.

Make the mousse filling Measure off the Amarula or coffee and the water into a medium-sized mixing bowl. Sprinkle the Chocolate Mousse Mix over the Amarula or coffee mixture, and beat until well blended.

In a smaller mixing bowl, whip the cream to soft peak stage. Fold half of the whipped cream into the mousse, then use a spatula to fold in the remaining cream until well blended. Pour the filling into the cooled pecan crust. Cover and refrigerate for 4 hours or overnight.

Release the tart from the rim of the loose-bottomed flan tin and place it on a cake stand.

Pile the berries on top of the mousse. Serve chilled.



Buy the book

Ina Paarman's *My Favourite Recipes* is a book for the head, the hand and the heart, featuring 100 of her all-time favourite recipes, beautifully photographed by Micky Hoyle. In between, Ina lets you in on her love affair with food over a 50-year career – from the ups and downs to tips and advice. The focus is on fresh seasonal produce, and her clear, nurturing style of writing recipes and explaining techniques ensures stress-free cooking.

My Favourite Recipes, which is self-published in collaboration with Coppersmith, costs R435 in the Paarman Foods online shop – visit paarman.co.za to order a copy. The book will also be available at selected retailers such as Exclusive Books and Checkers.

Win

We are giving away three copies of *Ina Paarman: My Favourite Recipes*. Send an email with your name, physical address and telephone number to helloplatteland@gmail.com with the phrase "Summer Ina" in the subject line. The closing date is 24 February 2023.



Last-minute Christmas cake

Here's a homegrown version of traditional fruitcake that requires no "ripening". Wrapped in heavy foil, it keeps at room temperature for two months – I tested it. Or you can freeze it for up to nine months.

Makes **1 cake (30 cm)**

Preparation time **30 minutes**

plus soaking time

Cooking time **45 minutes–2½ hours**
(depending on size)

YOU NEED

FOR THE CAKE

- 2 rooibos tea bags
- 2 cups (500 ml) boiling water
- 500 g dried fruitcake mix
- 4 extra-large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 cup (250 ml) canola oil
- ¼ cup (60 ml) fresh orange juice
- 1 x 650 g Ina Paarman's Chocolate Cake Mix

- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) mixed spice
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) ground cinnamon
- 400 g glacé cherries, halved
- 100 g pecan nuts, chopped
- ¼ cup (60 ml) marmalade
- ½ cup (125 ml) brandy

FOR THE GLACÉ FRUIT TOPPING

- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) smooth apricot jam
- glacé cherries
- pecan nut halves
- green fig preserve

FOR THE WHITE GLACÉ ICING (OPTIONAL)

- 1 x 250 g Ina Paarman's Vanilla Icing Kit
- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) milk powder (or use Cremora Coffee Creamer)
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) butter
- ¼ cup (60 ml) fresh lemon juice
- a little boiling water

THIS IS HOW

Make the cake Place the tea bags in a 1 litre measuring jug and add the boiling water. Leave to draw for 5 minutes. Remove the tea bags, squeezing them out, and add the dried fruitcake mix to the tea. Leave to soak for 30 minutes or longer. Drain the fruit and reserve 1¼ cups (310 ml) of the tea for mixing the cake.

Adjust the oven rack to the centre position and heat the oven to 160°C. Use one 30 cm x 7 cm round cake tin, or two smaller 18 cm cake tins, or 12 mini containers – we used deep, large muffin pans. Butter the tin(s) and line the base(s) with baking paper.

Beat together the eggs and oil. Add the 1¼ cups (310 ml) reserved tea, followed by the orange juice, and beat. Add the dry Chocolate Cake Mix and the mixed spice and cinnamon. Stir with a spatula until roughly blended.

Add the soaked fruitcake mix, cherries, nuts and marmalade. Fold it all in by hand with a spatula until evenly blended. Fill the tin(s) three-quarters full. Bake a large cake for 2½ hours, two smaller cakes for 1¾–2 hours, and mini cakes for 45–50 minutes. As soon as the cake(s) come out of the oven, pour the brandy over and leave to cool in the tin(s) for 20 minutes before turning out.

Make the glacé fruit topping

Allow the cake(s) to cool completely before topping it. Melt the jam in the microwave oven for about 30 seconds. Brush the top of the cake with warm jam. Arrange the fruit and nuts in tightly packed rows or circles on top of the cake. Lightly glaze the fruit and nuts with warm jam. Wrap the cake in heavy-duty foil before storing it in an airtight container.

Make the white glacé icing Sift together the Vanilla Icing Kit and milk powder. Heat the butter and lemon juice in the microwave oven. Gradually stir the lemon juice mixture into the icing mixture. If it is much too thick, add a little boiling water immediately, otherwise it will thicken more. Spoon over the cake. **P**



Super bowl

A cool salad packed with refreshing flavours and crunchy goodness is one of the most practical and appealing ways to up your vegetable intake over the high days.



Minty summer salad with yoghurt dressing

What a delicious, fresh-tasting salad! Two tips I can offer is not to leave out the mint, as it adds a refreshing flavour, and, importantly, to dress the salad just before serving to prevent it from drawing water.

Serves **5–6**

Preparation time **20 minutes**

YOU NEED

FOR THE SALAD DRESSING

- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- ¼ cup (60 ml) Ina Paarman's Greek Dressing
- ¼ cup (60 ml) plain yoghurt
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) Ina Paarman's Lemon & Black Pepper Seasoning

FOR THE SALAD

- 3 large ripe tomatoes, sliced into small wedges
- 1 bunch of radishes, washed and sliced finely
- ½ English cucumber, unpeeled, halved lengthwise and sliced finely
- 3 spring onions, including green tops, sliced on the diagonal
- ¼ cup (60 ml) roughly chopped fresh mint leaves
- a handful of fresh basil or parsley leaves, torn
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) Ina Paarman's Green Onion Seasoning

THIS IS HOW

Make the salad dressing in advance

Mix all the dressing ingredients together and keep in the fridge.

Make the salad Combine all the salad ingredients in a bowl, toss gently to combine and season with Green Onion Seasoning. Pour some dressing over just before serving. **P**



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Mountain magic

No matter the season or the weather, the Drakensberg casts a special spell. This awe-inspiring natural treasure has to be protected at all costs, says **Harvey Tuckett** from Creswell Park in Roodepoort, Gauteng.

– Cathedral Peak, Drakensberg –

Cathedral Peak and the surrounding environments are important to me, as this is where my love of uKhahlamba – “the barrier of spears” – started. As members of the Durban Ramblers Hiking Club, we would hike these areas time after time, never tiring of the hills, cliffs, valleys, caves (our home away from home) and rivers.

The seasons each had pros and cons, none of which dampened our spirits. We relished each challenge that the Berg subjected us to. Climbing up uMlambonje Pass, sleeping in Twins Cave, looking across the tops of the clouds below all the way through

to Royal Natal National Park, or simply walking the valleys and sleeping in the Lower Berg caves... Being pelted by hail or frozen by snow was all part of the experience where we could enjoy what our Creator had provided us with.

It is quite amazing how we can take the rough with the smooth and enjoy it all.

Let us hope these wonderful environments are left to nature and are not spoilt by corrupt, greedy developers. We need these open spaces to be our lungs, the trees and plants being our “Amazon”, giving us good clean fresh air. Long live the Berg. **P**

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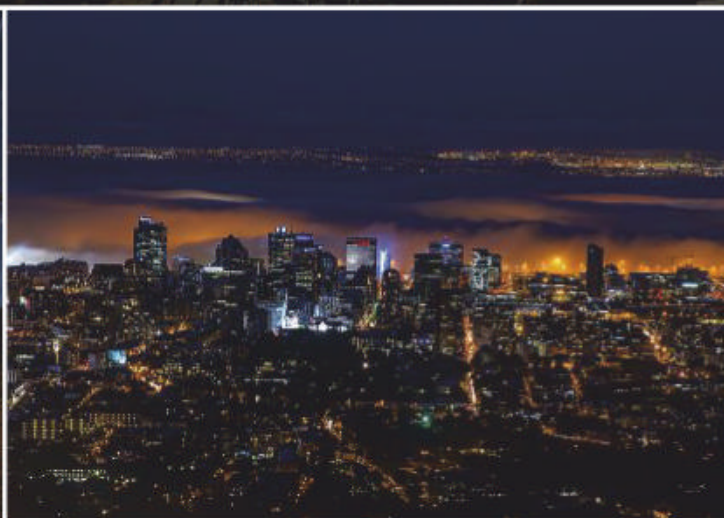
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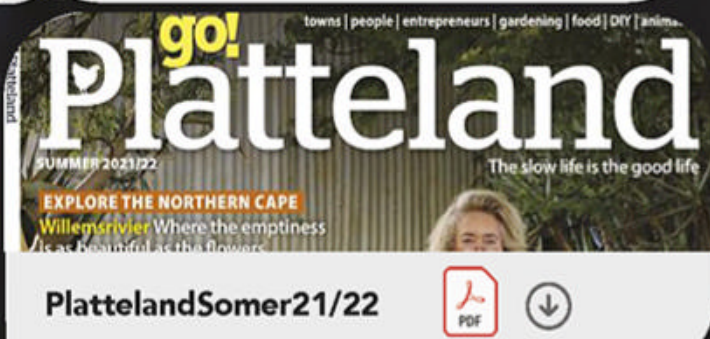
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