

go!

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

Platteland

SPRING 2023

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- Find out where Woolies's tulips 'hatch'
- Masterclass: how to make bitterballen, appeltaart & klets kopjes

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SPRING 2023

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PHOTOS: GREG COX, PETER VAN NOORD, VANESSA BREWER AND GAYE BOSHOFF



Cover

PHOTO PETER VAN NOORD

MODELS
WASHINGTON MENDES
FILHO AND STEPHEN
BENADE, PHOTOGRAPHED
IN THEIR VEGETABLE
GARDEN AT OLIVE GROVE
(OPPOSITE THE NG
CHURCH) IN KORINGBERG



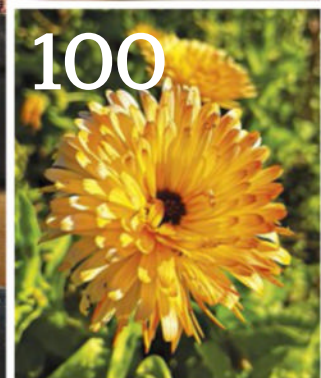
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EDITORS' LETTER



PHOTO ANRI MATTHEE

The 'Platteland' home industry

You have in your hands a product of a home industry that relocated to a sleepy village called Koringberg at the end of 2018.

Koringberg has occasionally featured in *Platteland* since 2013, but we have never told the full story of this town, despite many requests from our readers. Now the time has come: In October Koringberg celebrates its 100th anniversary. It is more cosmopolitan than before, sure, but it remains a modest, simple and unassuming spot, the kind of place your grandmother would call "a one-horse town". The very opposite to the semi-glamorous office *Platteland* used to have in Cape Town's city centre.

In this rural home industry, we produce a magazine – mostly on the computer in the study, but often on the verandah, in the garden, at the dining table, or on the road. The other "home bakers" – including Willem van der Berg in Bloemfontein, Mia Louw in Johannesburg and Nelspruit, as well as our designer and our English copy editor in Cape Town – send their creations via email and Dropbox... We're lucky if we get to see the other members of the home industry in person once a year.

It reminds me of what Sandra Kritzinger, former chairperson of the famous Tuiskoop home industry in Ermelo, said to *Platteland* back in 2017: "Home industries can't afford to be nostalgic about the 'golden years' before delis and supermarkets appeared in the countryside – your business will never survive or progress. Many home industries struggle because almost every supermarket nowadays has a bakery counter where everything is made in bulk with preservative-filled premixes. Competition is getting tougher as consumers face financial pressure, and with rising food and electricity prices, the biggest challenge for a home baker is to keep the prices competitive without compromising quality."

In this fortieth edition of *Platteland*, we express our gratitude to Koringberg and its residents for their contributions and support – see everyone who has graced our covers over the past 10 years on page 69 for starters.

Also, we deeply appreciate your support in these trying times – thank you!

Johan & Peter



The Summer 2023/24 issue will be distributed countrywide from **24 November 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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Chitchat

Tulip capital of the world

winning
letter



Row upon row of colour – not only in tulips but also other bulbs, such as this white and purple strip of hyacinths. The flowers are cut when they are at their prettiest.

On Sunday 30 April 2023, I visited the famous spring garden at Keukenhof in the Netherlands along with nearly 50 000 other visitors from around the globe – a new record. Every year, about 7 million tulips and other bulbs are planted here by 20 leading growers and exporters of flowering bulbs, and they use the spring exhibition as a marketing event.

What a spectacle! Neat paths, a forest of verdant trees, streams and blooms as far as the eye can see in artfully laid-out flowerbeds. It's sensory overload: the colours, the scents... In one place, you even "walk on water" across a stream that is about 10m wide! (Thick wooden slabs lie hidden just under the surface of the water.) People lined up to experience it. In an indoor pavilion, world-class orchids were displayed and offered for sale. Here you can find new ideas and inspiration for your own garden.

Keukenhof Castle was built in 1641, and the estate grew to encompass an area of about 200ha. In 1857, landscape architects Jan David Zocher and his son Louis Paul Zocher redesigned the castle gardens.

Ben van Rensburg from Strand will receive an Ina Paarman gift pack worth more than R1 200 for his winning letter. It contains a copy of Ina's new hardcover cookbook, *My Favourite Recipes*, a gift bag with her four new Curry Cook-In Sauces, and a small stainless-steel rack with eight of her spice mixes. Convenience is key when it comes to Ina Paarman's products, but not at the expense of taste, flavour and health. This extensive range is made in the traditional way from fresh seasonal ingredients – perfect for lending every meal a gourmet touch. Visit paarman.co.za for a variety of recipes and some online shopping. Also try Ina's recipe for papino, lime and chilli sambal on page 127.





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 "Contact" to write your letter, or send an email to helloplatteland@gmail.com. Please include your name and surname and, importantly, the town where you live. *Platteland* reserves the right to edit and shorten letters at our discretion.

PHOTOS REINETTE VAN RENSBURG



When the garden was opened to the public and buyers for the first time in 1950, it attracted 236 000 visitors. Last year, the visitor numbers averaged 23 000 per day... over a period of about 50 days.

To ensure there are always flowers to see over the eight weeks of the season, the gardeners stagger the planting over a period of three months beforehand. Other interesting information:

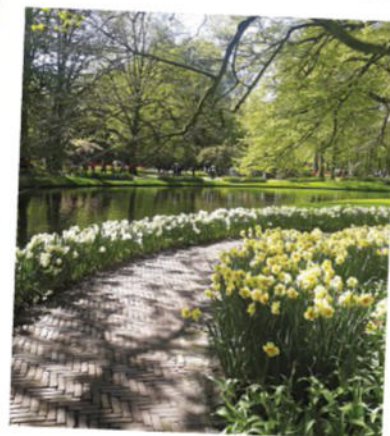
- 1 Tulip bulbs were first imported to the Netherlands from the Ottoman Empire, now Turkey, in 1600.
- 2 Today more than 24 000 ha (240 km²) in the Netherlands

are planted with flowers, and 60% of them are tulip bulbs.

- 3 Once the tulips have flowered in the fields around Keukenhof, they're left for a while, after which the flower stalks are cut off so the bulbs can develop. Each plant produces four to six bulbs.
- 4 The floral and bulb industry earns the Netherlands about R130 billion per year.

**Ben van Rensburg
STRAND**

Read our article on page 28 about South Africa's largest tulip farm at Rawsonville where flowers are grown hydroponically. >



Keukenhof overwhelms the senses, and you're bound to bring back a host of new ideas for your own garden. (And who knows, perhaps Ben comes across a bunch of flowers at Woolworths towards the end of this year that descended from the bulbs in these photos! – Eds)>

Solving problems

My wife, Kotie, and I decided in March 2023 to spend two weeks in Clarens and surrounds, and to stay at Kiara Lodge for the duration. We explored the area, and one afternoon on our drive back to Kiara we saw these “faces” on two rocks. We came to the conclusion that these two guys had to be “putting their heads together”.

Thank you very much for all your interesting articles.

**Leon Venter
KIMBERLEY**



Sweet memories of Graaff-Reinet

I was born in Graaff-Reinet, and I really enjoyed the article about the town in the Winter 2023 issue of *Platteland*. Graaff-Reinet remains a special place in our country, and even though I have not lived there for 54 years now, I will always regard it as a privilege to visit the town.

After completing school at Hoër Volkskool I studied at what was then the University of Port Elizabeth. I subsequently lived in Pretoria and then in Potchefstroom, the place where I've lived the longest. Thinking of Graaff-Reinet always evokes beautiful memories and nostalgia. Unfortunately, none of my acquaintances are left, except for a few schoolmates.

The people of Graaff-Reinet all participated in and accepted responsibility for the education of the children in the community. The adults would never hesitate to go and talk to your parents if you happened to have been caught in a transgression. Here, I immediately think of the large garden plots in town planted with almost every imaginable fruit tree. Of course, we children couldn't resist the temptation to steal fruit – in fact, it was more for the adventure of it, because our parents had big gardens too! My wife still maintains that Graaff-Reinet's fruit was some of the best she'd ever eaten. Naturally, there were also *leiwat* furrows and everyone had their turns allocated for watering their gardens – something that often gave rise to serious discord...

Thank you very much for a great magazine that always takes us back to special places.

**Herman Strydom
POTCHEFSTROOM**

Rhodes is calling!

Annalise and Arnold Hoon of Ah! Guest House here in Paternoster gave me a few copies of your magazines, and I so enjoyed reading them. It got me thinking...

I recently did a 4x4 tour in the mountains around Lady Grey, Elliott and Rhodes, and found Rhodes to be a hidden and forgotten gem. Chris and

Annemarie Oosthuysen, native to these parts of the world, were also on the tour, which was like a journey of discovery. There are Scottish families in the area with the most beautiful gardens. A rehabilitated drug addict who has achieved a lot in sport offers training sessions. Guest accommodation in this

picturesque area varies from farm stays to the Rhodes Hotel, which serves delicious meals.

But with Tiffindell Ski Resort having closed down, things are tough. I hope my letter serves as inspiration for you to visit, so these people are not forgotten...

**Pikkie Daniel
PATERNOSTER**

Old buildings with stories to tell

My husband and I buy *Platteland* regularly – we think it's the best magazine! We are retired but we still live on Wolwevlei, where our son now farms, in the Middelburg district in the Eastern Cape.

There is a very old house on the farm, but the outbuildings in the photo are even older – we don't know when exactly they were built. There is the Waenhuis, as it was called, and a cell in which crooks were apparently housed temporarily – in a wall you can see the iron bars of a small window. There used to be a post office and a shop too. The lower section of the walls are built of stone and the rest of raw bricks. Unfortunately, the buildings are now so dilapidated and construction costs so high that it would be impossible to renovate them.

My dream has always been to convert the three rooms into accommodation units and name them so guests can choose whether they'd like to stay in the cell, post office or shop.

The farm used to be a hub where the postbag was dropped off and picked up again, and certain items for farmers in the area were transported here by bus.

It's one of many farms around the country with buildings that have an interesting history.

Marita Botha
MIDDELBURG (EASTERN CAPE)



Picnics are the best

There's a certain charm to the word "picnic". It's derived from the French "*pique-nique*", which means to pick at your food. So a picnic is not so much about the food but rather about the ambiance and the feelings it evokes. It's an opportunity to enjoy abundance and peace for a while.

Years ago, I was invited to a spring birthday picnic at the impressive farmhouse at Rusoord in the Karoo. Rows of picnic baskets awaited us, prepared with the greatest care. From there, we walked to a dam surrounded by poplar trees, where we spread the blankets we'd been given among the trees.

Next to the water, in dappled sunlight filtered through the leaves, we unpacked our baskets, and we laughed, ate and enjoyed a carefree camaraderie. We had bubbly, fruit skewers, savoury snacks, cheeses, olives, cold cuts, sosaties and the most delicious sweet treats. Sitting there on a picnic blanket among friends, I felt small and insignificant, yet also safe.

A picnic gives us time for a pause. Respite from our busy lives.

Lynette Strydom
GQEBERHA >

Thanks for 'real' people

Honestly, your magazine is the only one I buy. Why? Because you write about the "real" people who live in the platteland and authentic rural agritourism experiences. Your Winter 2023 edition, dedicated to the farmers, encouraged me to continue the work I do to give our farmers the opportunity not only to sell their produce but also to be proud of being farmers.

Thank you. Your magazine is so refreshing, so meaningful. It is my "motivational" read!

Jacqui Taylor
CAPE TOWN >



The day my *Platteland* was pinched

I don't know to whom in the editorial office I should direct my enquiry, so in imitation of the generic salutation in a testimonial, I'll just say, "To whom it may concern".

In January this year, I was hospitalised, and a friend brought me the latest edition of *Platteland*. It was my very first introduction to the magazine, and, infatuated, I was hooked right away!

Another patient had no reading material and borrowed the magazine from me. The next day she went home with my magazine, although I don't think it was done on purpose. (Hmm... *We're not so sure of that.* – Eds.)



I was really sad, because I hadn't finished reading it yet.

What's more, there was something on the "Let's go to town" pages that I intended to buy as a gift for someone. It's a fig drink, but I cannot remember whether it's a liqueur or a gin. This date is approaching fast, so I would be very happy if you could send me a copy of that edition or give me the details of the product.

**Joss van der Merwe
RIETBRON**

All sorted, we hope your friend likes the gift! – Eds.



In tatters

Platteland is more than a magazine. It's almost like a letter from a friend. The Winter 2023 edition in particular was a winner in my book; it gave me great pleasure as I read it from cover to cover a few times until it was falling apart. You've taught me that the slow life is the good life, and to live life to the fullest.

- Maria van Zyl's story ("Ballad of the butter farmer") is amazing. What a passionate and dynamic woman – dressed in her camel-coloured dungarees and rubber boots she even has the looks of a dairy farmer.
- We visited Groot-Marico. It's such a friendly, untamed area! The people welcome you with a spirit of gratitude, joy and warmth.
- Graaff-Reinet is a beautiful town and surely has the most magnificent NG church in the country. I love this clean, tidy town with its exceptional natural beauty.
- Winter recipes... Wow, the most delicious, most flavourful food. I made the Provence-style beef stew for my husband's birthday, and he said it was the best present he had ever received. I am definitely going to say hello to Monché Muller at the Pink Valley Wines restaurant.

I think *Platteland* is the best outdoor *and* indoor magazine. I can't do without it. I will use my lunch money and starve rather than miss this magazine full of news, new things and inspiration. It puts some pep in my step for the following three months.

Goodness! May you become as seasoned and timeless as most of Elvis's songs! Never stop rock 'n' rolling, and continue to challenge us with your topical articles and provocative and timeless grace!

Platteland makes me feel like Alice in Wonderland: you take me to hiding places where I get the healthiest vitamins for my body and best plasters for my soul. I am just crazy about this beautiful magazine.

**Antoinette Schoeman
RIEBEECKSTAD**



A go-slow tour to the Cape and back

Our “go-slow tour” had been months in the planning. We were heading for the beautiful Cape. While browsing through my collection of *Platteland* magazines, I had read about the towns of Merweville and Nieu-Bethesda. We decided we had to visit these two places.

After an overnight stay in Bloemfontein we tackled the long road to Merweville. The road was not without its challenges, of course. Huge transport lorries and roadworks will test any driver to the limit. When the N1 got too tedious, we stopped at Chargo Farm Stall in Colesberg for breakfast.

We drove on, and finally we took the Merweville exit at Prince Albert Road and followed the winding road through gorgeous Karoo landscapes. When we arrived in the town, we saw

the large church etched against the late-afternoon sky. Even though it was early May, there was a nip in the evening air. After a delicious braai under a star-studded Karoo sky, we sought out the cosy bed in our typical Karoo self-catering house.

The next morning at the Boekklub coffee shop we enjoyed “Tom’s omelette”, after which we explored the town and did some shopping at the Merweville Mall. A mall with only one shop – fortunately one full of surprises.

When we departed, we left behind a sleeping Merweville. We were back on the N1, and it wasn’t long before we were enveloped by the mountains and vineyards of the Boland.

It was Friday afternoon and the Cape was beautiful, bathed in a golden glow from the last rays of the sun. Table

Mountain in all its glory appeared on the horizon.

Too soon we had to leave a wet Bloubergstrand and say goodbye to the mountain.

After turning off the N9, we followed the road to the fairy-tale village of Nieu-Bethesda. But before we got there, we were surprised by the sight of De Toren, a landmark in the area. We looked down on a patchwork of cultivated fields.

We eagerly explored the village, and the highlight for us was visiting Helen Martins’ Owl House.

The go-slow tour was coming to an end. Back home, I relived our journey with my green-glass-eyed owl. Together, we looked to the east and became silent and filled with gratitude.

Denese Eloff-Rheeder
BELA-BELA 



Above lies Merweville in the arid Karoo. These days even more people know about it thanks to the TV series *Die Boekklub*, which was set in the town. (And the nougat that is produced there! – Eds) On the right is De Toren, just before you get to Nieu-Bethesda, and above right is the owl that Denese took home and now faces east.



News & diary

Sunshine, blooms, festivals, sweet temptations...
These are just some of the ways to welcome spring.

COMPILED BY ANRI MATTHEE



With sugar and butter, my Darling!

The Darling Sweet team is celebrating the arrival of spring with the new sinfully silky Butterscotch Soft Caramel, their eighth flavour in the nine years since the brand was launched.

They started out with one pot, two staff members and a production premises of 24m² in what used to be his antiques shop, says Frits van Ryneveld, co-founder and co-owner of this Swartland enterprise. Today they're grateful to be able to employ

28 full-time staff in a 500m² space.

Darling Sweet now produces 10 types of toffee, but the original three variants – Tannie Evita's Classic, Honey & Salt and Sour Fig – still hold a special place in the Darling Sweet kitchen. In 2018, seven kinds of soft caramels were introduced, and now an eighth one: the new Butterscotch Soft Caramel.

Frits met Hentie van der Merwe in 2013, and the two of them soon started dreaming of having their

own toffee factory. They knew it would require hard work – and lots of sugar and butter. And where better to realise their dream than in Darling, a town well known for its quality dairy products.

Numerous late-night experiments later, Darling Sweet opened its doors in 2014, and now, after nearly a decade, these popular handmade toffees in their distinctive bright packaging fly off the shelves at many a farm stall.

Frits says working with the dedicated Darling Sweet team is probably the best part of his job. One of their main goals is job creation. They feel their relationship with the town has grown stronger, and their tasting room and Evita se Perron draw many tourists, who spend their money at other local businesses too. There's a lot of goodwill in town towards their business.

When Evita se Perron struggled to stay afloat during the lockdown, Frits and Hentie stepped in to take it over, aware of what a key heritage treasure it was. In 2020 they started the Swartland Kitchen at Evita se Perron, where they bake five kinds of rusks and three kinds of biscuits. There, five staff members run a coffee shop, a deli and the theatre as part of an empowerment project.

What's more, a portion of the profit from the sales of Tannie Evita's Classic toffees goes to the

Darling Trust, a charitable trust set up by Pieter-Dirk Uys to uplift the local community through education and skills development. Donations to the Dell Cheetah Centre in the Free State – a non-profit organisation that focuses on the rehabilitation of wild cheetahs – come from the sale of soft caramels.

Being in this business for nearly 10 years has taught Frits and Hentie not to be afraid of hard work, but also not to have too many irons in the fire. They took on so many projects and ventures that they ended up working seven days a week. They had to downsize, minimise and delegate. These days they each focus on their strengths, Hentie says.

They have different talents, Frits adds. He is good with daily problem solving, and Hentie is skilled at long-term planning and strategising.

They're always coming up

with new ideas and searching for inspiration and ways to innovate. At the moment they're relooking their packaging. "Watch this space," Frits says.

Visit Darling Sweet in Long Street and Swartland Kitchen at Evita se Perron in Darling.

Contact darlingsweet.co.za

frits@darlingsweet.co.za

[@_darling_sweet_](https://www.instagram.com/_darling_sweet_)

[@darlingsweethandcrafted](https://www.facebook.com/darlingsweethandcrafted) >

WIN!

Three lucky readers will win a Darling Sweet gift pack, each worth R250. Go to platteland.net, click on "Win" and fill in the form. In the last field, type the keywords "Spring" and "Darling". The closing date is 23 November 2023.



Darling Sweet's toffees and soft caramels are available in various flavours.



Frits van Ryneveld and Hentie van der Merwe started dreaming of having their own toffee factory in 2013, and launched Darling Sweet in 2014.



All the toffees are made by hand.

The clivias are blooming

It's a madhouse at Utopia Clivias in Sedgfield during spring, says the owner, Carrie Krüger. "Springtime is flowering time, and the nursery is full of life and colour. It is an exciting time, because new hybrids are blooming for the first time. At our annual open weekends – this year from 15 to 17 and 22 to 24 September – visitors get to experience thousands of clivias in full bloom." (Find more information on page 19.)

Clivias, also called bush lilies, are popular with South African gardeners. The genus is endemic to South Africa and Eswatini, and comprises only six species, although an astonishing number of colour varieties have been developed over the years by breeders like Carrie.

Growing up on a farm in the Eastern Cape instilled a love of nature in Carrie from a young age. She owned a nursery for years, but in 1998 she decided to focus exclusively on clivias – and that's how Utopia Clivias came about.

As it gets warmer after winter, the pollination of interspecies varieties at the nurseries comes to an end, Carrie says. The seeds have been harvested and planted, orders have been mailed to people in numerous countries, and the team start to transplant seedlings into larger pots.

Carrie is a clivia expert. She is constantly working to develop new, interesting colour varieties, and she's involved in the international Clivia Society. Years of dedication have produced a few varieties of which she's particularly proud.

Carrie says Star Green is their flagship plant, with remarkable colours that set it apart from the rest. It's the kind of plant that raises clivia breeding to a new level, she says. With Star Green as breeding plant, Carrie has created beautiful hybrids that have been registered on the international clivia register. They are also proud of all the interspecific clivia varieties that they've bred over the past few years, as well as their Vico Pink and Ghost ranges.

The business is a family affair. Carrie and her husband, Zwaai, dedicated a part of their clivia garden to the memory of their eldest son, Jason, who died in 2009. They donate seeds to young people and learners worldwide who are interested in clivias, and in this way his spirit lives on. Today, their son Luke is at the helm of the business with Carrie, and will take over when she retires. Their daughters, Kyla and Jade, also lend a hand when necessary.

Looking back over a quarter of a century in the industry, Carrie says there have been tough times, and patience is a virtue when it comes to these plants. "What you sow, you cannot reap immediately," she says. "Clivias are so beautiful, but few people realise how long it takes to get them to flower. To get from a seed to a flowering clivia takes five years."

But then you get that one plant that stands out head and shoulders above the rest... "And then you know you've hit the jackpot. Those flowers make the long wait worth it."



ABOVE Carrie Krüger is a clivia expert – her numerous awards and trophies are testament to her expertise.

LEFT Star Green is Utopia Clivias' flagship variety.



Get the soil ready for planting

Spring is the best time to prepare your garden for planting clivias, Carrie says. Start by choosing the right location: a spot with full or partial shade.

Clivias prefer soil with good drainage and a slow-release fertiliser like 3:1:5. Cover the soil with mulch, and plant them 50–60 cm apart in a clivia planting medium with added bone meal. If the soil remains wet, mix in river sand to improve drainage.

If you plant clivias in containers, use equal amounts of potting soil and clivia planting medium, with gravel in the bottom of the pot for drainage. Make sure there is always a layer of mulch on top of the soil – the plant will require less watering, and it will help to simulate clivias' natural growing conditions in the wild.

Contact utopiaclivias.co.za

f @CliviasatUtopia **@** utopia.clivias

@ utopiaclivias@gmail.com

☎ 083 343 1288



ABOVE During spring, the clivias flaunt their colours at this Sedgfield nursery.

Real Cape brandy is tops

South Africans once again excelled at this year's Intercontinental Spirits Challenge, a showcase of the best spirits made in Europe and Africa.

When the African entries were judged in Stellenbosch in May, Oude Molen's XO Cape Brandy was named one of four Trophy Award winners.

The XO, which stands for "extra old", is an elegant example of a Cape brandy. The flavour profile is not the result of any additives or fancy tricks – all it took was good wine, expertise and time, says Danie Pretorius, commercial manager at Oude Molen Distillers.

It's believed brandy was first distilled from Cape wine on board a Dutch ship in 1672. But the Belgian René Santhagens was the first man to distil brandy at the Cape according to the traditional Cognac method, in 1910. It earned him the moniker of "the father of South African brandy".

These days, brandy distillers have to meet strict requirements for their product to be classified as a Cape brandy. It must be produced from grapes grown in the Cape Wine Regions, must be double pot still distilled, must contain at least 38% alcohol

by volume, and 100% of the brandy must be aged in oak casks of less than 340 litres for at least three years.

Oude Molen has a singular place in the Cape brandy world as the distillery that René Santhagens set up himself and where he made his first Cape brandy in 1910 – on his farm Oude Molen at the foot of Papegaaiberg in Stellenbosch. Since 2003, the distillery has been based at Grabouw in the Elgin Valley.

• Visit the distillery in Worcester Street, Grabouw, but phone ahead to schedule your visit.

Contact oudemolen.co.za **@** info@oudemolen.co.za ☎ 021 859 2517

@ oudemolen.brandy

f @OudeMolenCapeBrandy

@ oudemolencapebrandy3178



WIN!

Two lucky readers will each win a bottle of Oude Molen Brandy worth R1350. Go to platteland.net, click on "Win" and fill in the form. In the last field on the form, type the words "Spring" and "Oude Molen". The closing date is 23 November 2023.

Quick-and-easy curries

Ina Paarman and her team, who are always busy innovating, have been brainstorming and cooking up a storm in the test kitchen with their Curry Cook-In Sauces. They've created two brand-new flavours: Durban Curry, a hot curry sauce with full-bodied flavour, and Cape Malay Curry, a mild, sweet and savoury sauce made with fragrant spices. They've also made the existing Butter Chicken Curry even more flavourful, and the Tikka Curry now sports new packaging. On Ina's website you'll find great recipe suggestions. The range should be on shelves from September but is already for sale online at R48 for a 250 ml pouch.

Contact paarman.co.za >





The proof is in the fire

Aggeneys, Jeffreys Bay, Cradock, Oudtshoorn, Wellington, Robertson, Stilbaai, Malmesbury... The platteland is well represented among the 20 participants in the cooking reality series *Kokkedoor Vuur & Vlam*, which was filmed in Struisbaai in the Overberg, and is broadcast on Thursdays at 20:00 on kykNET (DStv channel 144).

Participants have to cook everything in the flames, over the coals, in the ash or on a grid, and try to impress the judges, award-winning chef Bertus Basson and braai guru Kobus Botha. There are 20 contestants: 10 with no formal training or professional experience; and 10 who have qualifications and/or experience working in a professional kitchen.

Here is a delicious recipe for Braai Day from Errieda du Toit, content producer on *Kokkedoor Vuur & Vlam*, specially for Platteland readers.

A local delicacy

To Errieda, skilpadjies represent everything that is exceptional about the South African braai. It's also about being hospitable: skilpadjies make great snacks or finger food that you can offer guests hot off the braai grid. What's more, a skilpadjie is a delicacy – it's very similar to the French *crêpinette*, a small, flattened sausage parcel wrapped in a thin casing of caul fat and grilled over the coals. (Caul is a lacy membrane of fat that surrounds the digestive organs of pigs, sheep and cattle – enquire at your butchery.)

Skilpadjies

As is the tradition among French fishermen and sheep farmers in the south-west of France, Errieda likes to serve her home-made skilpadjies with fresh oysters, a mignonette (a classic sauce made from vinegar and shallots) and white wine.

Serves **8–10**

Preparation time **15 minutes**

Cooking time **15–20 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 1 kg lamb's liver, cleaned
- 100 g kidney suet
- 1 slice of bread, crumbled
- ½ cup (80 ml) milk
- 1 ml finely grated nutmeg
- a pinch of ground cloves
- 1 small onion, chopped finely
- ½ teaspoon (2,5 ml) chopped fresh thyme leaves
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) brown vinegar
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) Worcestershire sauce
- 1 piece of lamb caul

HERE'S HOW

Rinse the caul in warm water. If it's tough, allow it to soak in the water until soft. Dice or mince the liver and kidney suet.

Soak the breadcrumbs in the milk until soft. Add the bread mixture to the liver mixture, along with the rest of the ingredients, except the caul.

Spread out the caul on a cutting board and cut off

the thickest parts. Slice the thin caul into squares of about 10 cm x 10 cm. Place a heaped spoonful of the liver mixture on each square and fold the caul neatly to enclose the filling; secure it with toothpicks and sew it up with coarse yarn.

Braai the skilpadjies for 15 minutes over medium coals, until the fat is crisp and golden brown.

TIPS

- Serve skilpadjies with something acidic to cut through the fat. Braai lemon halves over the coals and serve them with the skilpadjies.
- Another option is to reduce verjuice and drizzle some over the cooked skilpadjies.
- Serve skilpadjies with a sauce made with 125 ml good vinegar, 15 ml freshly ground black or white pepper, and 30 ml finely chopped shallots or red onion.



It's a dog's life

As the days are getting longer and warmer, most people need no excuse to spend more time in the outdoors. Dog owners have all the more reason for doing so – and your dog will love going to Paws & Boots Country Dog Park in Midrand.

Heather Whitfield's interactive dog park offers a nifty obstacle course on which dogs can safely satisfy their curiosity and develop confidence in their abilities. You won't find another playground like this one, Heather says.

Where did the inspiration for a park like Paws & Boots come from?

The idea came to me in 2019 when I saw the need to promote the well-being of dogs and families out of doors. There is a growing demand for animal-friendly outdoor spaces that stimulate dogs mentally and physically – we saw this as an opportunity to create a one-of-a-kind, fulfilling experience. With the impact of Covid-19 on people's mental and emotional wellbeing, we also wanted to provide a safe and beautiful environment where one can enjoy nature. People yearn for the outdoors and open spaces.



Heather Whitfield and her Shelties La-Fe, Ashley and Zia.

What are some of the things you do at Paws & Boots?

Our services are designed to provide a simple but exceptional experience for pets and their owners. When you visit our park, you can walk along lovely trails and have fun with your dogs. We also have an obstacle course with challenges for dogs of all ages and sizes – it's designed to build their confidence. And we offer opportunities for fundraisers and

other functions, organise trail runs with dogs over weekends, and host competitions on the obstacle course for dogs and their handlers.

In addition, we offer Puppy Life Skills classes at the park to introduce puppies to a typical farm environment with cattle, sheep and horses. We are currently developing a puppy boot camp as a holiday programme for children.

Why is an interactive playground like Paws & Boots necessary?

As dog lovers, we understand the joy we get when we see our dogs running and playing outside. Our park provides a great environment for dogs to socialise and exercise safely.

Interactive courses are excellent for dogs. The equipment on the obstacle course encourages them to try new things they cannot do at home. It promotes human interaction, because dog owners are encouraged to play and learn together. The topography of the course includes various surfaces, such as gravel, sand and grass, which creates further variety.

Our park's nature trails and outdoor obstacle course are well designed to offer stimulation in a safe environment. On the trails the dogs need to be on a leash, but on the obstacle course they can run freely.

Can I just drop in?

We are open from Thursday to Sunday, 08:00 to 17:00, at 15 Douglas Road, Glen Austin, Midrand. Phone ahead, send an email, or book online at pawlife.co.za.

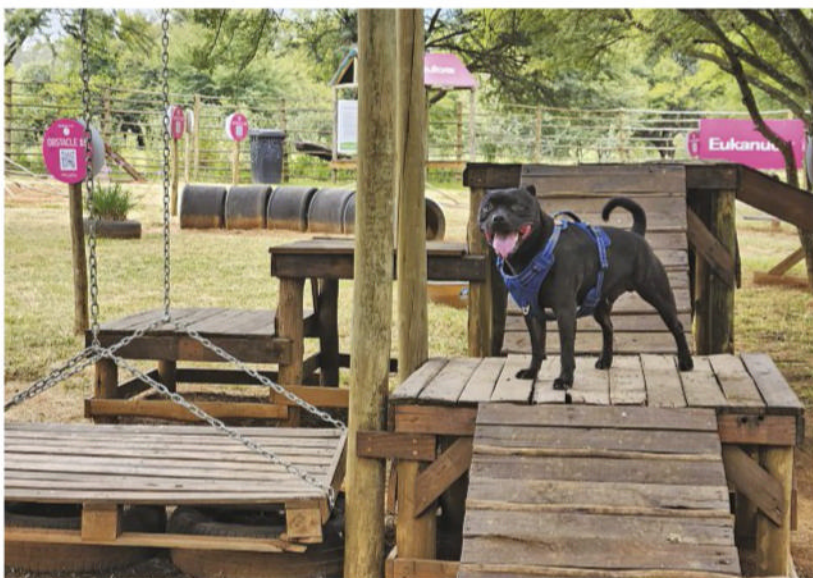
Day visitors pay R60 per person; admission is free for dogs. We also offer an annual pass (R1200 single, or R1800 for a family of four).

Contact  info@pawsandboots.co.za

 Paws & Boots Country Dog Park

 @pawsandbootscountrydogpark

 083 566 7009 >



The obstacle course is specially designed to boost dogs' confidence and curiosity by encouraging exploration.

Dates to diarise*

WESTERN CAPE

Swartlandskou

MOORREESBURG

6–9 September

Visitors to the largest agricultural show in the Western Cape, now in its 89th year, can once again admire the finest horses, cattle, sheep, poultry and machinery. Highlights on the programme include an agricultural seminar, a formal dance, live music, market stalls, a wine garden, good food, and mountain-bike challenges over 10 km, 40 km and 60 km. A large part of the arena will be transformed into a play area and petting farm for children.

Tickets Prices vary depending on the day and specific events; buy tickets via [TicketPro](#)

Contact 📞 022 433 1607

[swartlandskou.co.za](#)

✉️ info@swartlandskou.co.za

📱 SwartlandSkou -

Moorreesburg

Riebeek Valley

Motor Show

RIEBEEK-KASTEEL

9 September

Marvel at classic, vintage, veteran and antique cars, motorbikes and tractors, as well as the latest technology from, among others, Ford,



WESTERN CAPE

Waterblommetjie Festival

WINDMEUL CELLAR, DOMAINE BRAHMS & RHEBOKSKLOOF WINE ESTATE, PAARL

2 September

The humble waterblommetjie is the star of this annual festival, where you can enjoy this indigenous veld food prepared in traditional and innovative ways. The classic waterblommetjie stew will always be a hit, but you might be interested in trying waterblommetjie ice cream or pizza, or finding out which wines go well with waterblommetjies. Endemic to the Western Cape, this aquatic plant is rich in vitamin C and was traditionally used as food and for medicinal purposes in the Khoekhoe culture.

Windmeul will host a potjiekos competition and there will be a farmer's market on the day. At Domaine Brahms you can eat, taste wine and browse a treasure trove of collectibles while the kids enjoy the play area. And Rhebokskloof offers play areas and entertainment, expansive lawns, and great food and wines. Festivalgoers can also take part in a trail run called Run the Vines and enjoy live music.

Admission is free, but everyone is asked to bring along a tin of non-perishable food as a donation for the Athlone House of Strength, a shelter for abused women and children in Paarl.

Contact 📧 wines@windmeul.com 📱 Waterblommetjie

Fees 📱 @waterblommetjiefees 📞 021 869 8100



Porsche and Bentley at the Riebeek Valley Motor Show, hosted by the Rotary Club. It will be held on the grounds of the Riebeek-Kasteel Primary School. There will be market stalls selling everything from die-cast dinky toy cars and old car parts to delicious food and wines. The gates open at 10:00 and close at 16:00.

Tickets R100 (adults), R50 (learners) from [howler.co.za](#) (free entry for children under 6)

Contact 📧 riebeekvalley.motorshow.co.za

Succulent Festival

CALITZDORP

15–17 September

The Calitzdorp Succulent Society is hosting its fifth Succulent Festival this year. It's a great opportunity to find out more about the special endemic succulents of the Little Karoo, talk to growers and buy plants. Programme highlights include an exhibition of botanical art, a rare plant auction, a walk in the veld and a gala dinner.

Admission Free, but fees are payable for workshops, guided tours and certain special events.

Contact 📧 info@vetplant.co.za 📱 Calitzdorp Succulent Society [vetplant.co.za](#)



Whisky Weekend

MCGREGOR

15–17 September

McGregor's thriving whisky society hosted this gathering for the first time last year, and after the resounding success and heaps of fun, this year's instalment promises even more excellent whiskies to taste. The main event will be held at the nearby Lords Winery on the Saturday. Be sure to secure your place at the table by booking early.

Tickets R1 200 per person, via Quicket

Contact McGregor Whisky Weekend 083 282 2797 (Jon) mcgregorwhisky-weekend.co.za

Open weekend at Utopia Clivias

SEDGEFIELD

15–17 and

22–24 September

Come to enjoy the tranquillity of the clivia garden in full bloom or visit the nursery daily between 09:00 and 17:00, where numerous varieties will be for sale. You can also buy online.

Contact utopiACLIVIAS.co.za

Clivia at Utopia Clivias

@utopia.clivias

utopiACLIVIAS@gmail.com

083 343 1288

Veld & Sea Flower Workshop

CAPE PENINSULA

16 & 30 September and
1, 8 & 21 October

This special experience offers the opportunity to see wildflowers in a new light. Create your own flower crown and sip herbal tea before you take a stroll through the garden to pick edible flowers. After the day's experimentation, you'll have new insight into how to use flowers in food and

drinks. The organisers ask that you wear comfortable shoes and bring an extra bunch of colourful flowers with you – and don't forget your sense of humour and a healthy appetite!

Tickets R1 200 per person, via Quicket

Contact veldandsea.com veldandsea@gmail.com

072 234 4804

Herb Festival

MONTAGU

22–25 September

The Montagu Museum again hosts South Africa's only herb festival over the Heritage Day long weekend, with talks, workshops, guided tours, special herbal menus at all the restaurants in town, and a market where, among other things, plants, essential oils, skincare products, and

herbal teas and remedies will be for sale. The five themes are medicinal herbs, edible herbs, mushrooms, healing traditions and healing landscapes.

Tickets montagumuseum.co.za/herb-festival-2023

Contact montagumuseum.co.za Montagu Herb Festival mherbfest@gmail.com 084 451 2942

Lamb and Olive Festival

MERWEVILLE

22–25 September

Op Friday's programme is a "Let's taste" dinner, ghost tour and star-gazing. Saturday kicks off with a fun run, a mountain-bike race, a potjiekos competition and a pickleball tournament, and ends with a dung-spitting contest, a spit braai and a snoek braai

Contact 076 437 5509

lamenolyffees@gmail.com Merweville Lam- en Olyffees

Earthskills Gathering

GREYTON

22–25 September

Celebrate Heritage Day weekend at this family-friendly gathering with workshops on leathercraft, felt-making, woodcarving, traditional Xhosa basketry and mat-making, forging, wild medicinals, bushcraft, eco-printing and plenty of activities for children. In the evening there will be campfires, storytelling and music.

Tickets Quicket (prices vary)

Contact earthskillsafrica.org/gathering events@earthskillsafrica.org 082 328 4901

De Rust Open Studios

DE RUST

23 & 24 September

De Rust's local artists, craftspeople, gardeners and galleries open their doors for the third time this year, and invite people from all over to visit their homes and studios. Moreover, the old-world charm of this Victorian town with its iconic Karoo architecture is best explored on foot.

Contact 084 701 4566 (Marita) or 083 268 6708 (Carol) >



GAUTENG

Joy of Jazz

SANDTON

22–24 September

Celebrate the Heritage Day long weekend in style at this showcase of the best jazz talent from South Africa and abroad. This weekend-long party is always a highlight on the Gauteng live music calendar.

Tickets Computicket

Contact joyofjazz.co.za Standard Bank Joy Of Jazz 011 326 0141



Celebration of Fynbos FERNKLOOF NATURE RESERVE, HERMANUS 23–25 September

The Hermanus Botanical Society invites visitors to celebrate the wonders of fynbos. A display titled "Patterns in Nature" will give you a new appreciation for our indigenous vegetation. There will also be engaging children's activities and various items for sale, including books on plants, local wines, delectable food... and plants, of course.
Contact fernkloof.org.za
 botsochermanus@gmail.com Hermanus Botanical Society & Fernkloof Indigenous Nursery

Melkbos Feesmark NG CHURCH, MELKBOSSTRAND 29 September – 7 October

This market has become a regular fixture on the *Platteland* calendar thanks to the wide variety of gifts, toys, decor items, homeware, and delicious goodies and meals on offer. There will be more than a hundred exhibitors, so make sure you have enough time to browse all the market stalls.
Contact 082 552 0301
 Melkbos Feesmark
 melkboskersmark@gmail.com (Juanita)

Barrydale in Bloom BARRYDALE 6–8 October

This year, the Barrydale in Bloom Open Gardens Safari incorporates more than 25 gardens – including veld, medicinal and vegetable gardens – in Barrydale and Smitsville. The proceeds will go to the Barrydale Hospice. Activities on the full weekend programme include

LIMPOPO

Spring Festival

MAGOEBASKLOOF AND HAENERTSBURG 23 & 24 September

Spend the Heritage Day weekend in this delightful part of the country as nature puts on her party dress. The festival showcases the wares of local producers, so you'll be able to enjoy great food, craft beer and gin unique to the area. The magical Cheerio Gardens will be open to visitors, and hiking trails in the area are highly recommended.

Contact Spring Festival kurtwacker182@gmail.com
 083 326 5836 (Kurt)



a scarecrow competition; a Mad Hatter's G&Tea party; a flower arranging workshop; a garden market with food stalls and a tea garden; a long-table botanical meal; talks by Dr Ernst van Jaarsveld, Yvette Anderson (see page 108) and Gordon Aeschliman; an exhibition of botanical art at the Karoo Art Hotel; and a guided walk in one of the seven labyrinths in and around the town.

Tickets Weekend tickets cost R600 per person. Quicket
Contact Barrydale in Bloom

Wine and Patat Spring Festival NAPIER

28 October
It's the 30th anniversary of this festival, and the celebration promises to be a big bash. The people of

this characterful Overberg village are pulling out all the stops to offer visitors delicious food and wine. Pop in at restaurants, tuck into snoek and sweet potato, and browse market stalls.
Contact 082 596 5681
 napierwinepatatfees.co.za
 napierpatatfees@gmail.com @napierwinepatatfees

GAUTENG

FNB Art Joburg SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE

8–10 September
Africa's leading and longest running contemporary art fair, now in its 16th year, is a showcase of the best contemporary art talent on the continent.

Tickets via Tixsa
Contact artjoburg.com

Muddy Puppy event PAWS & BOOTS COUNTRY DOG PARK, MIDRAND 1 October

Dog owners are invited to bring their fur kids to spend some quality time walking, running and completing obstacles, taking on mud and water, and just enjoying the 2–3 km course together. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to SAVA-CVC, a non-profit organisation that provides veterinary health care to animals from disadvantaged communities.
Tickets R210 per person on the day; R170 per person if you book in advance; R90 per child under 12; dogs free; buy tickets via Quicket
Contact Paws & Boots Country Dog Park @pawsandbootscountrydogpark
 info@pawsandboots.co.za 083 566 7009

WineX Wine Festival SANDTON CONFERENCE CENTRE

25–27 October
South Africa's premier wine festival will feature more than 150 exhibitors offering more than 800 wines for tasting this year. It's the place to be to meet and mingle with winemakers and wine enthusiasts, and to taste the latest vintages.
Tickets via Webtickets
Contact winex.co.za
 WineX 011 482 5936

EASTERN CAPE

African Brew craft beer festival RICHMOND HILL BREWING CO., GQEBERHA 3–5 November

This touring craft beer festival will be held in Gqeberha this year. Africa Brew brings together

amateur and commercial brewers from all over Africa to network and exchange ideas. The brewery chosen to host the festival is also tasked with making the official Africa Brew beer – a base recipe with the host's own twist. The proceeds from beer sales are always donated to a local charity.

Tickets from R250 per person, via [Plankton](#)
Contact info@africabrew.co.za
[f](#) Africa Brew - Brewers Unite [@africabrew](#)
info@africabrew.co.za

KWAZULU-NATAL

Spring Leap Fest THE OLD MUSHROOM FARM, HOWICK 2 September

This festival is a celebration of holistic health, fitness and wellbeing. Enjoy the day's line-up of yoga sessions, meditation, live music, dance, mountain-biking, inspiring talks and interactive demonstrations in a beautiful, serene setting.

Tickets R300 per person via [Quicket](#)
Contact [060 470 1218](tel:0604701218)
theoldmushroomfarm.co.za info@theoldmushroomfarm.co.za

NORTHERN CAPE

Weg! Ry & Sleep Bull Run VAN WYKSVLEI 5-8 October

This fun event, hosted by our sister publication, has been described as "a matric holiday for adults". Prepare yourself for an action-packed long weekend in the Northern Cape with classic cars, great entertainment and even better company. There will be live music to entertain spectators as the brave drivers compete on

the dirt roads and the dusty pan. Don't miss the Saturday evening's prize-giving and final get-together, where a rollicking good time is guaranteed.

Tickets The price for spectators is R1 575 per person, via [Quicket](#)
Contact [f](#) Weg Ry & Sleep Bull Run
gerrie@dustmedia.co.za



KWAZULU-NATAL

Durban Street Food Festival THE PAVILION SHOPPING CENTRE, DURBAN 22-25 September

Indulge in a culinary adventure and discover new experiences and flavours at Durban's largest food and music event. Explore exotic dishes and be enchanted by local fare. There will be a food truck arena, live music, craft and fashion stalls, and a children's play area – it's an event that the whole family will enjoy. And if you have a sweet tooth, don't miss the dessert extravaganza.

Tickets from R60 per person per day, via [Quicket](#)
Contact durbanstreetfoodfestival@gmail.com
[f](#) Durban Street Food Festival
[064 809 2066](tel:0648092066) (Georgios)

NORTH WEST

Aardklop National Arts Festival POTCHEFSTROOM 3-8 October

Potch's beloved arts festival returns to its home ground after 2022's pop-up events in three different locations. The programme features music performances, theatre productions, art exhibitions and topical discussions. You'll find the full programme on the website.

Tickets from R50, via [Ticketpro](#)
Contact [aardklop.co.za](mailto:info@aardklop.co.za)

MPUMALANGA

Dullstroom Country Festival 30 September

This food, music and lifestyle festival, held at Dunkeld Country & Equestrian Estate, returns for the fourth time, promising the same winning combination of local talent, great food, craft stalls and craft beer – against the backdrop of a magnificent mountain range. Various activities for the little ones make it a great day out for the whole family.

Tickets R125 per child aged 3 and older; R195 per teenager aged 13-17; R295 per adult, via [Quicket](#)
Contact [f](#) Dullstroom Country Festival
info@dullstroomcountryfestival.co.za



News about markets and bazaars

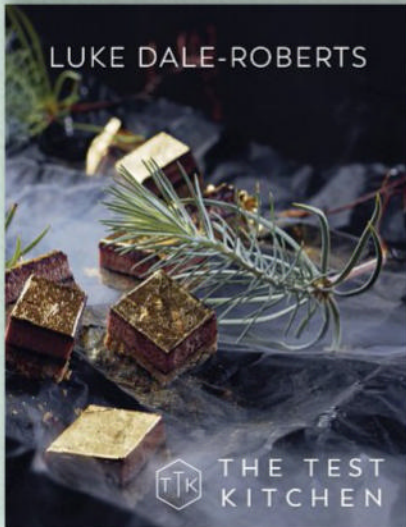
Let us know of events in your region that are taking place between 1 December 2023 and 29 February 2024 – the deadline for inclusion in the magazine is Monday 9 October 2023.

helloplatteland@gmail.com platteland.net [f](#) @Platteland

** Closer to the time of an event, go online or contact the organisers to find out whether or not it is going ahead as planned.*

Time to read

Close the chilly chapter on winter with a selection of fresh new books.



The Test Kitchen by Luke Dale-Roberts

Heralded as a founding pillar of the South African fine-dining landscape, The Test Kitchen operated for eleven years, won numerous local and international awards, and moulded the careers of many talented chefs. This stunning visual keepsake as flavourful as Luke's spectacular dishes celebrates this legacy and shares Luke's story, as well as some of the restaurant's most beloved and iconic recipes. With a foreword by Heston Blumenthal.

R1 500 Penguin Random House

penguinrandomhouse.co.za



How to enter

Type "Spring" followed by the keyword with each book in the subject line of an e-mail and send it, together with your name, street address (not postal address!) and cell phone number to helloplatteland@gmail.com. Or visit platteland.net, click on "Win" and fill in the form with the same keywords. The closing date is 23 November 2023.



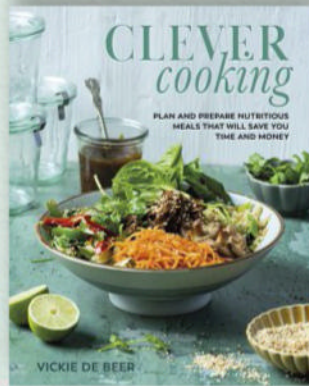
Easy Al Fresco by Ilse van der Merwe

Ilse offers an inspiring guide for easy and scrumptious dishes that can all be prepared without electricity and only a few basic utensils, and a fire or kettle braai. Don't miss the Summer issue of *Platteland* – we're publishing an exclusive extract.

R430 Penguin Random House

penguinrandomhouse.co.za

WIN 1: Al Fresco



Clever Cooking by Vickie de Beer

The subtitle of Vickie's latest book says it all: Plan and prepare nutritious meals that will save you time and money. Her secret? Meal prep. She shares some family favourites, from soups and stews to oven bakes and one-pan dishes.

R340 Penguin Random House

penguinrandomhouse.co.za

WIN 1: Vickie

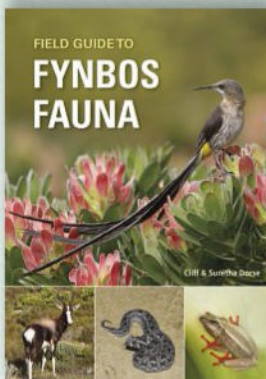


The South African Vegan Cookbook 2 by Leozette Roode

In her second book Leozette shares her vegan favourites like courgette and lemon tea loaf, lemon pepper pasta and polenta fries, as well as classics like Peppermint Crisp tart, shepherd's pie and papertert with chakalaka.

R395 Human & Rousseau nb.co.za

WIN 1: Vegan



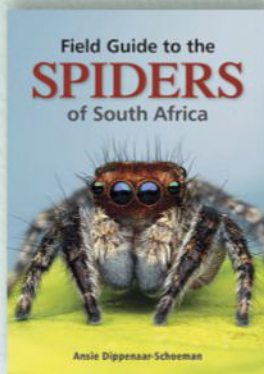
**Field Guide to Fynbos Fauna
by Cliff and Suretha Dorse**

This concise field guide, only available in October, covers more than 400 species in four animal groups in South Africa's Fynbos Biome: mammals, birds, reptiles and frogs. The species accounts include key identification features and are paired with full-colour photographs and distribution maps.

R350 Struik Nature

penguinrandomhouse.co.za

WIN 1: Fauna



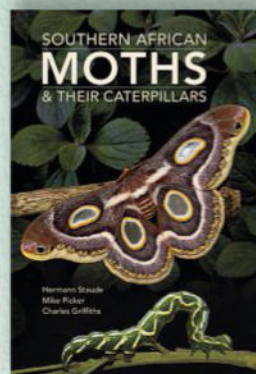
**Field Guide to the Spiders of South Africa
by Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman**

The long-awaited, thoroughly revised and updated new edition of this book is the most comprehensive guide to South African spiders published to date. It features over 780 of the more common spider species encountered in the field and in homes and gardens, as well as representative species from some of the rarer spider families.

R480 Struik Nature

penguinrandomhouse.co.za

WIN 1: Spiders



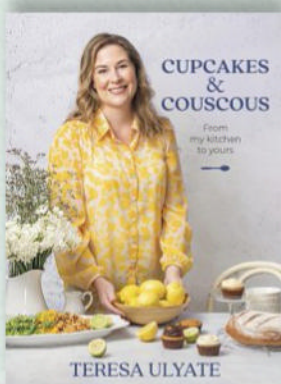
**Southern African Moths & Their Caterpillars
by Herman Staude, Mike Picker and Charles Griffiths**

Authoritative and informative, this book provides an overview of the moth fauna of the region. The guide features more than 1 500 of the 11 000 species occurring here and focuses on those that are most abundant, of economical or ecological importance, conspicuous or unusual.

R550 Struik Nature

penguinrandomhouse.co.za

WIN 1: Moths

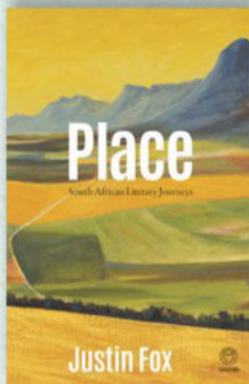


**Cupcakes & Couscous: From My Kitchen to Yours
by Teresa Ulyate**

Teresa Ulyate dedicates her debut cookbook to working parents, foodies and home cooks with quick, tasty, nutritious food that is easy to prepare and bursts with flavour. There's also a chapter on hosting an event at home, with sample menus.

R450 Human & Rousseau nb.co.za

WIN 1: Cupcakes



**Place: South African Literary Journeys
by Justin Fox**

In this gripping travelogue, Justin Fox sets off to explore the places of his favourite books – from the mountainous eastern Karoo of Olive Schreiner to the dusty plains of J.M. Coetzee's Moordenaars Karoo.

R320 Umuzi penguinrandomhouse.co.za ☎ 011 327 3550

WIN 1: Place



**Blackouts & Boerewors
by Karl Tessendorf and Greg Gilowey Coetzee**

Every blackout is a fire begging to be built and a family braai to happen. With some clever thinking loadshedding can go from the worst part of your day to the best.

R220 Penguin Random House penguinrandomhouse.co.za

WIN 1: Blackouts 📺

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PHOTO TANYA PAQUET, UNSPLASH



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Flower seeds R65 per packet
Adene's Farm Flowers adeneflowers.co.za



Azizi women's soft leather lace-up shoes
for broader feet R1 750
Bummel bummel.co.za



Vases made of reclaimed oak,
from left, Teardrop, Arch and Ellie
R190–R260 each
Oh Nice ohnice.co.za



Sense of the Karoo pomegranate syrup R95 and **orange syrup** R89
De Oude Fabreack deoudefabreack
046 685 0994



Farmhouse Cheddar cheese with chilli,
black pepper, coriander and cloves R162/kg
Kingwill Cheese kingwillcheese
iankingwill@twk.co.za

Let's go to town

The products featured here were made by entrepreneurs from Bedford, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, De Rust, George, Grahamstown, Greyton, McGregor, Oudtshoorn, Plettenberg Bay, Pretoria, Riviersonderend, Ruigtevlei, Sedgefield, Stanford, Van Wyksdorp, Vredendal and Wolseley.

BY MARIAN VAN WYK
PHOTOS GREG COX



Candles in the colour A Song of Africa
(10 cm–22 cm tall) R60–R123 each
Kers & Co kers.candle.sa
orders.kers@gmail.com



Plant-pressed ceramic side plates
(165 mm in diameter) R90 each
Veld_Pottery veld_pottery



Unfiltered, raw, single-source Fynbos Honey (1 kg) R195
Scrub Hare scrubhare.co.za

SHOPPING



Home-made natural dog treats,
from left, **Sun-Dried Liver Biltong**
(200 g) R90 **Omega Biscuits** (200 g) R40
and **Beefy Biscuits** (200 g) R40
Jayne's Dog Treats jaynesdogtreats.co.za



Olive oil bottle R330
French butter dish that keeps butter fresh
at room temperature: pour about 2 cm of
cold water into the base, spoon butter into
the lid, and place the lid butter-side down
into the base, sealing it off R440
Nicholas Koursaris Ceramics
[nicholas_koursaris_ceramics](https://www.instagram.com/nicholas_koursaris_ceramics)



Sense of the Karoo Radish Pickle R75
and **Orange Peel Wheels** R79
Brackkloof Farm Chilli Relish
with jalapeños and garlic (300 ml) R120
De Oude Fabreeck [deoudefabreeck](https://www.facebook.com/deoudefabreeck)
046 685 0994



Wing tealight candle holders
made of reclaimed oak R220 each
Oh Nice ohnice.co.za



Eco-friendly, sulphate-free **Hand & Body**
Lotion and **Hand & Body Wash** with
rose geranium and bergamot essential oils
(500 ml) R150 each
Mother's Love mothersloveproducts.com



Eco-Green Paws dog shampoo bars
with botanical ingredients such as khaki bush,
and oils for a silky coat R107 each
Roodt Made By Nature
[roodtmadebynature](https://www.instagram.com/roodtmadebynature)

Fig & Ginger Jam
with pomegranate juice R52 and
Pomegranate Vinegar (550 ml) R75
Pomaré [madebypomare](https://www.facebook.com/madebypomare)
pomare@tehillahfarm.co.za



Organic Cold-Pressed
Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (500 ml) R120
Blue Sky Organics blueskyorganics.co.za
Garlic-Stuffed Olives (650 g) R95
Nuts About Garlic
nutsaboutgarlic.company.site



Provençal Rub with paprika and tarragon;
Braai Rub with garlic and onion flakes; and
Chef's Salt with onion, herbs and spices
(100 g each) R45 each
My Urban Kitchen myurbankitchen.co.za
079 855 0464



Moon planter with a terracotta glaze and white inner glaze (260 mm) R675 and **Pluto planter** in pink with a terracotta-dipped base, also glazed on the inside (130 mm) R135
Plantify plantify.co.za



Ethical, eco-friendly **Ultim Spice Beard Oil** (30 ml) R75, **Charcoal Soothe After Shave** (200 ml) R90 and **Charcoal Soothe Shaving Soap**, all made with natural oils (12 g) R69
Antjies antjies.com



Gardener Soap with coffee and citrus in an exfoliating bag (115 g) R73
Antjies antjies.com
Wolf Garden bypass pruner R219
Builders builders.co.za



Leather sunglass strap R110, **splash-proof All Natural SPF 30+ Sunscreen** (100 g) R145 and **All Natural Peppermint Lip Balm** R40
Eva Natuurlik evanatuurlik.co.za



Natural Muscle Relaxation Bath Oil to soothe body and mind (100 ml) R155 and **Moringa Jungbrunnen cream** for ageing skin (50 ml) R170
Naturally Be Happy naturallybehappy.co.za



Glow hand-made soap bars, a reinterpretation of old-fashioned green soap, with tea tree essential oil, spirulina and bentonite clay R65
Roodt Made By Nature
[roodtmadebynature](https://www.instagram.com/roodtmadebynature)



Organic cotton beach towels, on the bottom, Folly towel in the colourway Fiddler Crab (100 cm x 180 cm) R1 230, and on top and right, Scout towels in the colourways Ladybug and Rocket (80 cm x 140 cm) R780 each
Mungo mungo.co.za

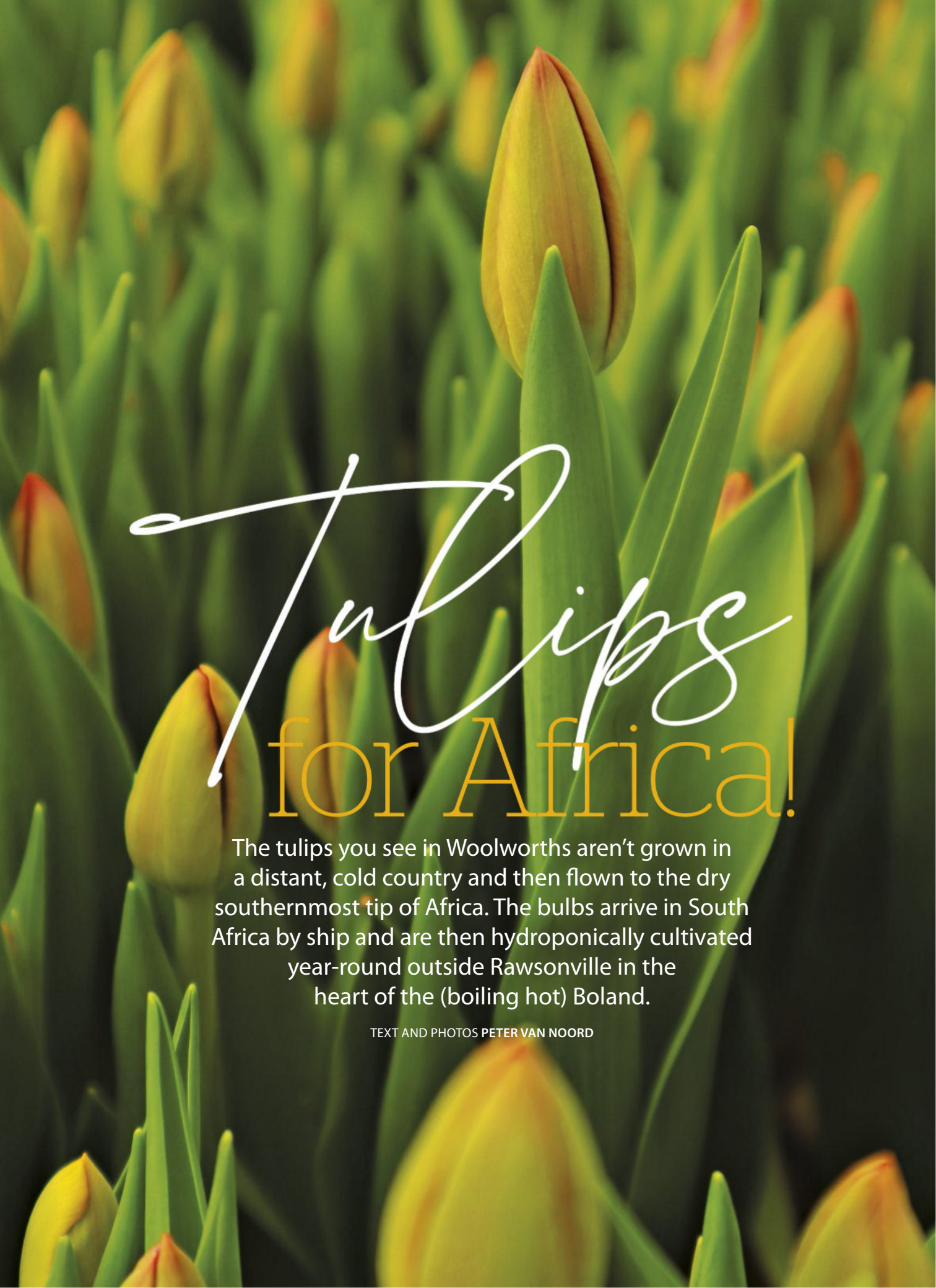
Wall hooks made of reclaimed ash wood R230–R250 each
Oh Nice ohnice.co.za
Vadoek cotton cloth in the colour Pesto R320
Mungo mungo.co.za



Mindful Colouring Seed Collection with five seed packets and colouring pencils in a cotton drawstring bag for colouring in the line drawings on the packets R239
Spinlea Farm spinleafarm.com

ENTREPRENEUR





Tulips for Africa!

The tulips you see in Woolworths aren't grown in a distant, cold country and then flown to the dry southernmost tip of Africa. The bulbs arrive in South Africa by ship and are then hydroponically cultivated year-round outside Rawsonville in the heart of the (boiling hot) Boland.

TEXT AND PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD



There are few things on earth as breathtakingly beautiful and enchanting as a silky-soft flower bud held aloft by a hand of tulip leaves. Maybe it's the simplicity of it: minimal lines, gentle, flowing. Modest pastel colours. A shy, profound beauty full of promise and with no airs and graces. No sweet perfume. No grand, dramatic gestures. Just purely a visual feast.

In 2003, we were captivated by an enchanting display when we entered the famous flower market in Amsterdam. There was an ocean of flowers as well as bulbs from which to pick and choose – specifically tulip bulbs that almost made our mouths water. Seventeen shades of white, it seemed. And who knows how many variations of red and

yellow and purple... and then, of course, the darker beauties: cobalt, navy, black. Delightful.

We loudly bemoaned our fate, knowing that we could take none of them home with us. The owner of the stall understood the opportunity: "I can hear that you come from South Africa – I have a cousin who lives there," he shouted loudly in our direction. "And these bulbs," he said, rubbing his hands, "have been approved to be transported to South Africa legally. My cousin often takes some back home!"

We were transformed into two children in a sweet factory. "What about the red?" "Wow, look at this blue, and the black..." In our mind's eye, we could visualise our garden turning into a small version of Keukenhof.

Of course gardeners always have friends who are also gardeners,

and what better gift for a gardener than a variety of exotic tulip bulbs? We walked out of there with boxes and boxes of different colours and varieties, and stacked them up on a table. We would pack all our baggage into one suitcase, we decided, and use the second, larger case for all our bulbs. Yes, this plan was guaranteed to work. Gifting problems solved.

At Cape Town International Airport, we didn't walk to the green queue where one tries to go through unnoticed; oh no, full of confidence, we strolled to the red queue and, with friendly smiles, proudly declared to the slightly bored customs officer: "Look there, everything nicely packed together!"

The reaction did not bode well. The man in uniform beckoned a colleague over. They slowly shook their heads. A call to an official higher up. No, this is not permitted.



Every last box – hundreds of euros' worth – was removed and unceremoniously carried away. Here's a number for you to phone, said one of the men, already listless once more.

Yes, you may have your bulbs back... after you have supplied five of each variety and colour for testing. Five different tests for each colour and variety, at hundreds of rands per test... the sums didn't look good.

We had finally come back down to earth with a bump. One suitcase bulging with dirty laundry... and a larger suitcase overflowing with empty tulip dreams.

IT IS 20 YEARS later and we have long since made peace with having a tulipless garden. We are in Africa, after all, with its wealth of aloes, fynbos and succulents. When you

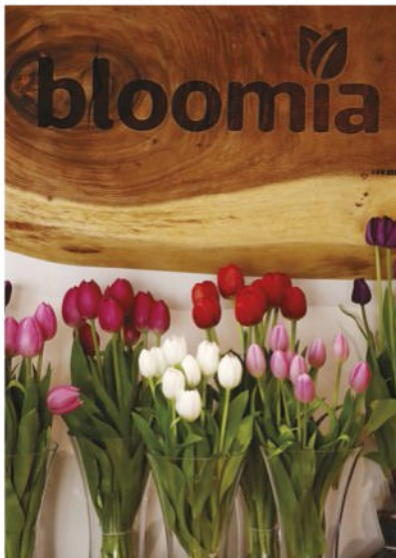
want tulips, you buy a bunch of cut flowers from Woolworths so that you can admire them in the house – fortunately Woolies' tulips, like most of their other products – usually last for a few days beyond their expiry date.

Our love of tulips will never wane. This is why we both experienced an almost childlike excitement at the prospect of visiting the farm Louwshoek outside Rawsonville, where the international company Bloomia cultivates millions of tulips annually, mostly for Woolworths.

From Rawsonville, you follow Boontjies River Road in a southerly direction. This is vineyard and orchard country, and in late winter all you can see are bare stems and branches, with only a scattering of blooms here and there. There is still a sprinkling of snow on the highest peaks, and the air is crisp and cold. At the T-junction, you turn right >

OPPOSITE The low white structure on the right side of the road, at the foot of Du Toitskloof Mountain, is where Adriaan van Wyk (opening spread, left) and his team cultivate 4,5 million tulip flowers per year. **ABOVE** The greenhouse, where it feels like spring in Europe, houses tulips in various stages of development at any given time. When the colours start to show (opening spread, right), they are ready for the shops.





ABOVE In Bloomia's Rawsonville office there are always flowers at reception...

RIGHT The bulbs arrive in South Africa in these crates – more than 20 000 bulbs per crate – and are kept 'asleep' in the first coldroom at 1,5-2°C. From here they go to the rooting room, where they are placed in water. In this coldroom the temperature is slightly warmer (4-9°C).



onto Voorsorg Road and head in the direction of Stettynskloof. Then, just before you enter the Du Toitskloof mountains, at a group of large old oaks, you will see the sign on the right: Le Domaine.

This farm is the South African home of Bloomia, the only supplier of tulips to Woolworths. Yes, every tulip you see at your nearest Woolies was born here.

ordinary farm road and then arrive at an ordinary facebrick building. Opposite is a large white 1600m² structure that houses the greenhouse, several coldrooms and the processing facility. There aren't hundreds of people rushing around between buildings, no noise. No trucks queuing and revving and beeping in reverse. In the reception office, Leanda Marais offers a friendly greeting, surrounded by bunches of tulips in various colours and a computer screen displaying an equally colourful photograph of these flowers. She offers rooibos tea, chats about the chilly morning. Points to the single red petal in the white tulip behind her. "Beautiful, isn't it? But it's actually an error; this won't end up in the shops."

Then the man who makes things happen around here appears: Adriaan van Wyk, director of Bloomia South Africa. Surprisingly, he isn't a slightly built guy in canvas

EVERY FEW WEEKS, 500 000 chilled tulip bulbs are delivered here – a total of 4,5 million per year – where they are hydroponically cultivated under strictly controlled conditions. Without a grain of soil or a drop of pesticide. Only liquid nutrients and water are used, and the bulbs are given fresh water daily.

One is immediately struck by how quiet it is here, how small the scale seems. You drive through an ordinary electric gate on an





LEFT On the table in the centre are tulip bulbs fresh from the rooting room. The rows in front and at the back have already started to form buds, but you cannot tell what colour they are yet.

sneakers with sunbleached hair, a nose- and/or earring and tattooed forearms. He's a large, down-to-earth fellow with a melodious voice who reaches out his hand and shakes yours so that you have no choice but to pay attention. He spent 14 years in the navy as a combat officer and today he is wearing his thick navy jacket with "AF van Wyk" embroidered on the left breast.

"Yes, I exchanged bombs for blooms!" Adriaan laughs. "But I thoroughly enjoyed my time in the navy. It was a good career and I learnt a lot. As an officer, great responsibility is placed on your shoulders. You learn how important good structures are and how to be a confident person." He thinks for a moment. "The one good thing about my current job is that no one dies when I make mistakes! And I have now spent longer in the flower business than in the navy."

He laughs and shakes his head

when he hears our tale about the Amsterdam smooth talker. "Those bulbs would not grow here easily, because they come from the northern hemisphere and therefore a different cycle. And they need the cold. Our winters aren't cold enough or long enough. It's not impossible to grow tulips here, but it is certainly very difficult."

THIS IS WHY Bloomia does not supply bulbs to the public. The company, which has its head office and a massive, ultra-modern facility in King George, Virginia, in the US, buys flower bulbs from growers all over the world, from the Netherlands to Chile and New Zealand – and cultivates them specifically for the flower markets in North and South America and South Africa. "We are the only supplier of tulips to Woolworths and 90% of our flowers go to their stores, >

Adriaan's business lessons

- **Cash flow is king.** "As they say, turnover is vanity (it is about your ego), profit is sanity (it is about the reason you're most likely in business), and cash is reality. Cash is king – we have been through some tough times and if it hadn't been for Bloomia, we would no longer exist."
- **Don't compromise on quality.** "I would rather throw away a damaged flower in the greenhouse than try to get a client to take it."
- **The client is always right...** "But only when it comes to taste!" laughs Adriaan.
- **Do what you do well** rather than chasing the latest craze.
- **Always be honest.** "Don't promise what you can't deliver – or as a friend of mine says: don't promise a Lunch Bar but deliver a dropping!"
- **Learn from – and correct – your mistakes.** "We started a product that works well as a gift for people in hospital where vases are in short supply. It consists of a bunch of tulips in a bag containing water. This is then placed in a container and packaged. Initially we placed the bulbs among pebbles stones, but this damaged the bulbs."
- **Look after people.** "The people who work here – mostly women – are my winning team. Bloomia transports them daily between where they live at De Nova (on the outskirts of Rawsonville) and Worcester, and also pays their children's school fees."

with the rest going to florists or event planners, usually for weddings. I must say, we are honoured to have been working with Woolworths since the beginning. Their standards are incredibly high and, from day one they have been the market leaders in flowers because theirs last for such a long time. They also build long-term relationships with their suppliers. They look after us well, and we take care of them. This symbiotic relationship is very important.”

Not a grain of soil is used at this facility – all 4,5 million bulbs that are awoken here annually are cultivated hydroponically, and the greenhouse is electronically controlled to maintain the same conditions that are found during the European spring. What’s more, everything happens under one roof, with just a handful of people involved.

THE BUSINESS started as a family project. After a visit to the Netherlands, Adriaan’s mother, Retha Alberts, who now lives in Worcester, and her husband, Kobus, decided that they wanted to come here to grow tulips. In 2009, after Adriaan had left the navy, he and Kobus started to erect the white structure, which was imported from the Netherlands. It is a technological wonder, where the temperature and humidity are carefully controlled by, among other things, automatically opening windows and curtains. But barely 18 months into the project, Kobus fell ill and passed away suddenly, leaving Adriaan to juggle all the balls in the air.

But the greenhouse was successfully completed. All the cooling and sorting equipment, coldrooms and pumps and waterpipes were ready. The first consignment of tulip bulbs arrived.

“I knew nothing, and the learning

curve was steep! However, I had previously spent five weeks working on a tulip farm in the US to see how things are done. And then I learnt a lot from the Dutch – their knowledge of flower production and agriculture in general is astounding. It is phenomenal that, after the US, such a small country is the largest agricultural exporter in the world. Of course this isn’t only products, but expertise and technology in particular.”

Then, a second tragedy struck. “Only two months after completing the greenhouse, a huge storm hit us and caused massive damage to the structure and equipment. We had borrowed a large sum of money for the cooling facilities and technology, and then it took six months for the insurance to pay out... The venture capitalists were ready to liquidate us.”

By that stage, Adriaan had built good relationships and even >



ABOVE Adriaan’s winning team: At the back are Lisa van Staden, Rechell Davids, Dena Tarentaal, Cinthy Isaacs, Lientjie Stuurman and Chantel Kees. In front are Moka Julies, Zaly MacDonald, Lauren Arendse, Jenine Doring, Elsabé Kachere (team leader), Azané Philander and Lientjie Carolus. **TOP LEFT** No soil is used in the greenhouse. The bulbs get fresh water daily, with all the necessary nutrients.

The journey of a tulip bulb



1

The bulbs, imported from the Netherlands, Chile and New Zealand, arrive by ship in South Africa in chilled crates. Each crate holds more than 20 000 bulbs. Every 6-7 weeks, Adriaan and team receive a consignment of 500 000, which immediately go into the coldest coldroom (1,5-2°C). This keeps the bulbs dormant.

When the time comes to let the tulip bloom – “remember, during the resting phase, the entire flower already exists inside the bulb” – it is anchored in special crates with sharp pins. Enough water is added so that only the root crown and the bottom of the bulb are in the water. In this room, the temperature ranges between 4°C and 9°C to mimic the European spring. The bulbs remain here until enough root mass has formed.

2



3

The bulbs are then moved to the large greenhouse, where the temperature is maintained at 16-18°C for the final 2-3 weeks. The older (and larger) the bulb, like most Dutch bulbs, the faster it will bloom.

Once the colour of the flowers starts to become visible, the stems are harvested and sorted. The stems are cut and arranged in bunches, then packaged in plastic wrapping. The sticker is applied and the flowers are placed in buckets of water and distributed to the shops. They can remain in the chilled despatch room for up to 2 weeks, but are usually on the road within a week.

4



5

The bulbs, discarded stems and leaves are then taken to the neighbour to turn into compost. And waste water is routed to the lovely garden at the home of Adriaan's mother, Retha Alberts (she is currently renting it out).



Tulips by numbers

4,5 million

The number of tulip flowers that Bloomia sells in South Africa annually.

16 million

The number of flower stems that were sold in the US in 2022 in the two weeks before Mother's Day.

20 million

The number of flowers handled daily at the Aalsmeer Flower Auction in North Holland.

4-7 weeks

The amount of time that passes from the moment the bulb is awakened from its winter slumber to when its flower is put on display in a shop. The Chilean bulbs, which are smaller, take seven weeks, but the older Dutch bulbs are ready within a month.

1

The number of flowers produced by a single bulb.

90%

The percentage of Bloomia's flowers that are supplied to Woolworths. The rest are delivered to a few florists and event planners.

Once the stems are cut, they are sorted on a conveyor belt and gathered into bunches, whereas discarded bulbs and leaves are sent to a neighbour for composting.



become friends with the owners of Bloomia in the Netherlands, where they purchased their bulbs. He was not prepared to throw in the towel. To escape liquidation and ensure that his staff kept their jobs, he proposed that Bloomia buy their company.

In 2013, they officially became part of the group, and Adriaan says he hasn't looked back since. Each year they sell more flowers, and with the current 4,5 million units that come through here each year, they have now reached their full capacity.

Disaster number three – when Covid-19 struck South Africa – also hit them hard. “We couldn't conduct any business for five or six weeks. Although the agricultural sector was considered an essential

industry, there was a ridiculous rule that people weren't allowed to buy flowers. We delivered boxes of tulips that had already been removed from the first coldroom to restaurants and hospitals, and later we just put boxes of blooms outside on the road and let people take them. Fortunately, thanks to Bloomia, we recovered quickly after Covid.”

When it comes to flower trends, Adriaan says he doesn't know much. “But many flowers are seasonal and there is sometimes an over-production, or flush, after which they disappear again. New tulips frequently appear on the market and older ones go out of production... The thing is, it is a type of monoculture that weakens and disappears over the years.



“What I do know is that, for the first time, more tulips were sold over Valentine’s Day this year than roses at the famous Aalsmeer Flower Auction near Schiphol in North Holland. Interestingly, tulips are not available all year round in the Netherlands. They are seasonal flowers there. People associate them with spring and there isn’t a big market at other times of the year.”

In this business, if you produce all year round you must plan long in advance, according to Adriaan. “To give you an idea: Our bulbs come from the Netherlands, Chile and New Zealand. The bulbs for the next phase are currently being harvested in the Netherlands, and by Christmas we will deliver our first harvest of those flowers in South

Africa. Now that the last of last year’s bulbs from the Netherlands are finished, we have been planting bulbs from Chile.”

What does he not enjoy about his job? “One of the worst things to see is at Keukenhof, when they use a huge sickle-blade mower to cut down all those flowers when they are at their most beautiful! During this time, the next flower inside the bulb is forming underground and so it must rest in order to bloom the next season.” 

Contact Le Domaine, Louwshoek, Rawsonville. 📞 023 004 0142
🌐 bloomia.com. Adriaan enjoys taking groups (maximum 20 people) through the facility, but visits must be booked in advance.

ABOVE Adriaan and his team conceptualised these gift-ready tulips, which are perfect for taking to someone in hospital, where there usually aren’t vases available. The tulips are packaged in plastic along with half a cup of water. The price tags are affixed here too.

RUGBY FEVER

Faith, hope & Van Wyksvlei United



Tough to the core, Van Wyksvlei United's best are teaching the Riverton side a lesson – they're used to the rough terrain, after all.

Good news is in short supply in Van Wyksvlei.
Job opportunities are scarce, and residents live largely
at the mercy of nature, their continued good health and
the odd cellphone signal. And then the local rugby team
gave the community something to cheer about.

TEXT AND PHOTOS WILLEM VAN DER BERG



Van Wyksvlei is but a speck of life in a vast expanse of emptiness. The remnants of big dreams.



To get somewhere if you start out in Van Wyksvlei takes patience, courage and singleness of purpose. The roads leading away from this small Northern Cape town are built out of gravel, limestone, clay soil and dust clouds. Each one labours through its own empty, sad open spaces – and then you’re only in Carnarvon, Brandvlei, Kenhardt or Copperton. Another day’s drive from a place where your children can go and learn something if they don’t want to follow in your footsteps and become farmers or farmworkers. Or where a doctor can save your life after a snake bite.

Only pale chanting goshawks escape Van Wyksvlei with ease; other beings rely on the mercy of nature, their continued good health and intermittent cellphone signals.

It has always been thus. The

Afrikaans writer FA Venter wrote in his autobiographical *Kambrokind* about life on a farm in the Van Wyksvlei district in the 1930s, when he was a teenager, describing it as a place the world forgot.

It’s as if the people from these parts have always clung to visions of something better, promises shimmering like mirages on the distant horizon.

Waiting for water

Garwood Alston was a land surveyor who planted a seed of faith when, in 1882, he got permission from the government of the Cape Colony to build a large irrigation dam between the windmill-high ridges at Van Wyksvlei – the first state-funded dam in the country. A number of people settled below the dam wall and along the ground canals, tilled the brackish land to grow crops, and waited...

“But to this day that dam has never been full,” says Vasie de Kock, who has had his eye on the Van Wyksvlei Dam for his entire 78 years, hoping to see an overflow. He does, however, remember some abundant seasons.

“Some years, our dirt roads would be worn out by all the lorries coming to haul away lucerne bales. And hey, even if the dam is only half-full, the water rises over many kilometres. If you go boating, after a while you can get bored of seeing all that water.”

Between 2012 and 2022, there was no boating on the dam. The drought took the last drop of moisture from the earth and from people’s eyes.

“Heavens, I’m telling you, it was quite a to-do,” Oom Vasie says. “In the evenings, you’d look through all the weather forecasts to see if one didn’t reckon a few clouds might be drifting towards us. But by doing that you ran the risk of losing your faith.” >



Ruhan Fourie, a friend from Bloemfontein, looking out across Van Wyksvlei Dam towards Frankieskop, which rises above the brown water “like a lost breast”, as Oom Vasie de Kock puts it.



ABOVE Within the small church, Ds Deon van der Berg tries to reinforce his congregation’s faith, hope and love. Van Wyksvlei United’s results are included among the announcements here.

LEFT This tiny shop, like many others in the Karoo, is run by a man from a land far, far away towards the east. His shelves were neat as a pin and fully stocked. The glass bottle of Coke was colder than the cold front rolling in outside.

RUGBY FEVER

Oom Vasie de Kock shoots the breeze with a new neighbour, Henk Schreuder, in fields of freshly cut lucerne. "The man is all the way from Natal. Now he farms here. Goes to show, Van Wyksvlei is not all that bad or unknown."





LEFT The only feet at the old hotel are the two concrete footprints in front of the steps to the stoep – and those of Ryno Swart, who is in fact supposed to be at school. “I can only go back to school once I have the correct clothing and shoes,” he says. **BELOW** The co-op’s last hope is Trudie Oberholzer. If she and her husband, Rudi, had to give up, that would likely mean the end of the GWK branch – and fuel – in Van Wyksvlei. **BELOW, LEFT** Even the sheep seem glad to see visitors, because with them came assistance during the punishing drought.



I experienced that myself when, just before Christmas 2020, I waited with Dawid and Eljo le Roux on their farm west of Van Wyksvlei for the heavy rain that had been forecast for the area. For four days and four nights, the elements scuffled and scrapped until the dark, rain-heavy clouds scrambled for the Free State. My emotions were in tatters. They’d experienced the 3 000th day of a drought and I couldn’t understand how they could still laugh.

“We’re 3 000 days closer to getting rain. What else would we believe?”

The drought broke in the summer of 2022. Van Wyksvlei Dam was almost full. Oom Vasie started tilling the land again and sowed lucerne. What else would he do?

“At least I was able to make a small profit, and now we have some lucerne for the next time we have to feed the livestock. It looks like that might be soon. We had poor rainfall again this year.”

Decline and progress

It’s hard to keep your spirits up in a place where you’re always anxiously watching the direction in which the wind blows the dust; not everyone can do it. In Van Wyksvlei, many buildings are falling into disrepair because there are no longer enough people to justify keeping open a hotel, a butchery, a hair salon or a tennis club. The Karoo Vleisboere agricultural cooperative decided in 2017 that there was too little business and closed the co-op, and with it the only fuel station in town closed down too. Trudie Oberholzer and her husband, Rudi, jumped into action, bought the fuel station and arranged for GWK to open a branch. They farm some way outside of town and manage the co-op.

“Some days I wonder why we do it,” Trudie says in the busy office. “But I also know that if this co-op with its fuel were no longer here,

Van Wyksvlei would be finished and *klaar*.” Outside, a small generator is humming, keeping a few lights, computers and the fuel pumps on. In the air-intakes in the ceiling, there are remnants of last year’s locust infestation. On the shelves you’ll find anything you could think of – not everything you fancy, but everything you need.

Trudie really wants people to visit their town and fill up with fuel, so she has fixed up three neat guest rooms in President Street.

“It was a bit of a gamble, but I’ve been surprised by the interest, and the rooms have been booked for the Bull Run in October. That’s a big injection for the town.”

The dominee and rugby

After a traumatic divorce, Deon van der Berg was looking for a quiet place where he could grieve without attracting too much attention, but >

These days kisses and reconciliation are what Deon van der Berg en Gerda Eybers believe in. And behind them the clouds, too, share their love with the Karoo.



André John (above) is Van Wyksvlei United's smallest player, hooker and "spring trap". Nobody escapes his tackles. Coach Jan Louw knows this, therefore André is seldom on the bench.



RIGHT In these parts of the Karoo, playing on dirt fields strewn with rocks toughens up the laaities from a young age. **BELOW, RIGHT** Yet another injury is seen to with a cup of water. No ice packs, Deep Heat or mercy. **BELOW** Every point scored by Van Wyksvlei United makes life in this forgotten dorpie a little bit easier.



also a place where he could serve people who needed healing. And because pastors heed God's call, he ended up living in Van Wyksvlei.

"Wow... It was a bit of a shock. There was no vegetation left – just the bare plains and stone. And the people were bone-weary. They were shadows of themselves. A large part of the community was dependent on donations from the public. So, before I could preach to them, I collected funds and livestock feed."

Deon quickly noticed a group of young guys playing rugby in a cloud of dust. He went to watch them play, and learnt it was a training session of the Van Wyksvlei United team.

"They didn't have nearly enough pairs of rugby boots, and not one pair was intact. The ball had also

seen better days. But the players were excited about taking part in the local rugby league. I thought, if rugby could mean something to these skinny young men, most of whom were unemployed, without proper boots, without plans for the next week, I had to help them to keep playing."

Deon started to ask around and was able to get sponsors for new jerseys, shorts and boots. In one of the first matches of the 2022 season, Van Wyksvlei United played against Prieska – "the farmers" – but when your team's new boots range in size from 3 to 8, and the opposition's boot sizes range from 8 to 14, you know it'll be tough to beat them. The score: Prieska 78, Van Wyksvlei 12.

Enthusiasm still 100%. >





And the more they play, the better they get. "When this team started to win, it seemed like nothing would stop them. Most of the guys are unemployed – there are no jobs or opportunities here. But now they had a purpose, something that gave colour to their grey future. There was something to believe in, and the whole community began to believe it. Van Wyksvlei United gave the town and its people a new energy."

United reached the final and came up against Prieska again. Everyone with a vehicle or a few rands helped to get the team, their supporters and their dream to the rugby field.

"It was a tough, beautiful game. We lost, 38–48, but everyone came back home with renewed self-confidence and hope. Now, Van Wyksvlei also has a women's sevens team, a soccer team and a netball team." Deon has arranged sponsors for them too.



A new season

The Pixley ka Seme Rugby League's new season has kicked off. Van Wyksvlei United are busy with one last training session on their home ground, the Danie Craven Sports Ground, before their match against Prieska Rivertons tomorrow.

"Did you hear what we did to the farmers last weekend?" Gerald Shabangu wants to know. "The score was 34–35; they won, but they got a big fright." >

Who needs the World Cup? If you'd like to see beautiful, hard rugby full of faith, hope and love, as well as spectators on donkey carts, attend a home game of Van Wyksvlei United.





Not too long ago, lions brought down gemsbok in this part of the world. Now Van Wyksvlei United do the same with every team that is brave enough to show up at the Danie Craven sports grounds.



Gerald and his teammates are all smiles, chests out, but coach Jan Louw is not looking happy. “No, guys; we’re a winning team. We can’t be satisfied with losing any more.” As the players are going through their drills, coach Jan tells me quietly how proud he is of these young men. “It’s no fun playing against those Prieska farmers. They’re *big* men. They tackle hard and they tackle late. For the effort they put into a sprint to catch up with you, they tackle you. Last weekend’s loss was actually a win. The scoreboard said we were one point short. I know these men have more than that in them.” Watching them training, it’s clear they do. The ball moves down the backline – the handling efficient, light-footed and gravity-defying. Even when the twilight deepens

and the winter chill settles on the Karoo and around the mauls, no one seems to get tired.

Then it’s time to announce the team for tomorrow’s match. There’s applause and cheering for every name that coach Jan reads off his list. In Van Wyksvlei, you first dream of playing for United, then for the Springboks.

“The guys who didn’t make the team for this match shouldn’t feel bad; your time will come. Those of you who’re playing tomorrow, let’s all have a good night’s sleep.”

Noticing the worn boots and mismatched trainers, coach Jan says, “We’re not going to look like this tomorrow. Borrow from one another, make a plan, but you can’t run onto the pitch tomorrow if you’re not wearing black shorts, red socks and a decent pair of boots.”

“We don’t have much,” he tells me, “but we’re not down-and-out.”

LATER THAT EVENING at the parsonage, Deon and Gerda Eybers are sitting in front of the fireplace. One day, his own new hope arrived like a mirage on the horizon. They met in March this year on a hike.

“I couldn’t believe that, at my age, and after everything, I would fall in love again,” Deon says. “I was afraid she wouldn’t feel the same way, but about 4km from Verneukpan I worked up enough courage up to take her hand.”

Gerda didn’t let go. She also welcomed the unexpected warmth and tenderness.

“Coming to Van Wyksvlei has been a blessing,” Deon says. “Being in this landscape and among these people has made me whole again. Here



I got the opportunity really to serve and help people. Of course, I would have liked to have done more to make sure they'll be okay in the long run, and I'll keep doing what I can, but I'd also like to get involved in more communities, and I have received a call to the congregation in Jan Kempdorp*.”

He hasn't told the Van Wyksvlei United team about it yet; he doesn't know how. Because he doesn't want them to feel the way he felt three years ago. They have to believe that love and caring are unconditional, and that it can be forever. To him there will never be another team this close to his heart..

A rowdy crowd

The Danie Craven Sport Grounds is a graded hectare of Karoo veld.

Between the two goalposts there are lots of stones and nothing softer than a small patch of sand. This is not the place to expect or to show mercy. You toughen each other up, as the guys here say.

It's Saturday morning and the frost has barely thawed, but the primary-school players from Van Wyksvlei, Williston and Brandvlei are already busy toughening each other up. Most of the kids play in socks to at least protect the skin on their feet. Still, every now and then, someone grabs hold of an injured toe, knee or head. No matter what the injury is, a jug of water is the only remedy and comfort. When the Van Wyksvlei players run for the try line, the supporters run along the touchline with them.

The referee struggles to control the crowd. >

** Good news for Van Wyksvlei and the rugby team: Negotiations with the Jan Kempdorp congregation deadlocked and Deon will remain in the Karoo. What's more, Gerda will be moving to Van Wyksvlei in November – just after their wedding!*



“We play to win. We play to make everyone feel better,” says Gerald Shabangu.



Grant Sass is Van Wyksvlei United's left wing and official barber. After fracturing a rib during a game against the Loxton Barbarians, he couldn't continue taking part in the rugby league.

At one stage, the second half of an u/13 match goes into overtime and eventually a parent shouts at the referee, "Sir, the time! Look at the time!"

The final whistle goes right in the middle of a rolling maul by Brandvlei's forwards. Williston's favourite move is clearly the Ferrari. Van Wyksvlei's most potent u/9 player is named Piksteel. And he's not the only potent player. The other day, the school in Prieska even "bought" young Kenro Tieties. Who knows how much untapped potential could be hiding in the dust of the Karoo.

THE RIVERTONS TEAM arrives at 14:00. The Van Wyksvlei United players watch closely as the men get off the bus.

"These guys are big," someone says.

"Big and slow," coach Jan says. "Guys, the rucks are going to be

tricky. Get the ball out quickly and let the backs run with it. Run them ragged."

Coach Jan does make a few changes to his team now that he's seen the Rivertons players. He calls Nashwill Slambee, the biggest guy from Van Wyksvlei, to the bench as a replacement player – in case the scrums get too tricky.

At 15:15, Rivertons kick off with a west wind behind them. The spectators now have to remain behind the wire fence, about 10 metres from the touchlines.

"Our crowds get quite rowdy," coach Jan explains.

Van Wyksvlei quickly scores two tries.

A group of women threatens to knock down the fence. One of them bursts through the gate to yell at Rivertons, "This is our field!"

It's tough; it's very tough. Oh, deep auntie! (one of United's line-out calls), it's tough rugby. Every now

and then a player throws a rock off the field. Gravel and soil have to be rinsed out of mouthguards from time to time.

Rivertons' left wing doesn't get up after a tackle by Elroy Klaaste, United's inside centre. He has to be carried off the field.

HALFTIME. Van Wyksvlei United 12, Prieska Rivertons 0.

"I like it, guys; I like it," coach Jan says. "The first half wasn't bad, but you can play even better. We have a dangerous backline: it can run; it can score tries. Let's run with the ball."

But Rivertons get a halftime pep talk too and is the first team to score a try in the second half.

With the score at 12–7, the spectators behind the fence are getting restless. The women sing an upbeat song, and the team responds: Ronaldo Snyman, Mario Cloete and Renico Mouers cut

through the Rivertons defence to score three more tries.

The people of Van Wyksvlei start to celebrate. "Thank you, United; we are very happy!"

One woman gets in a dig at the opposition: "Prieska, you don't deserve that KFC!" she yells, referring to this luxury in Prieska that Van Wyksvlei will never have.

Rivertons get the last word in when the team drives the ball over the try line one more time. Final score: Van Wyksvlei United 29, Prieska Rivertons 12.

"THESE HOME GAMES make people laugh and forget about their circumstances," Gerald says as we walk towards his house.

There is merriment in the streets. In the last light of the day, Van Wyksvlei looks like a nice play to live, in fact. Everything is painted in a soft red glow. The evening star is bright and seems close by.

The open spaces are vast and fresh.

On Monday morning, it will look very different. Then Gerald has to take his family's few sheep out into the veld and look after them all day.

Like every other day.

Coach Jan will continue to look for work, or hopefully someone with car problems will ask him for a hand, because he knows a car's mechanics. Ronaldo will have to unload feed at the co-op and refuel cars, no matter how sore his arm is after the rugby.

As for the other guys: yes, most of them are going to sit at home and think about the next match. Because if they win again, everyone can laugh and forget for another day.

- At the time of going to press, Van Wyksvlei United was second in the Pixley ka Seme Rugby League standings, one point shy of the leaders, Victoria Western Force. The final was scheduled for 26 August. 

Visit Van Wyksvlei Kick up dust at the Bull Run

The popular annual *go! Drive & Camp Bull Run* will be held from 5 to 8 October 2023 on a pan near Van Wyksvlei. Teams compete in vehicles with a registration certificate dated before 31 December 1985. The event draws hundreds of people who descend on the town to camp and compete and have fun. Enter via Quicket – but do so soon, as the places fill up fast.  Weg Ry & Sleep Bull Run

Stay over in town

Call Trudie Oberholzer of Inni Vlei Guest House if you'd like to sleep in a bed in town. ☎ 072 229 8025

Get involved

Visit the Facebook page  Beginet NPC to follow Ds Deon van der Berg's community organisation or if you want to support Van Wyksvlei United.

These days all the youngsters of Van Wyksvlei want to play rugby. They have seen that it is possible to win, even if you live on the bleak plains where KFC and rugby boots are as scarce as rain.





Koringberg

‘Absolutely nothing’ – or absolutely everything?

In October, the sleepy Swartland town of Koringberg and its NG church turn 100 years old. Although this rural spot just over an hour from Cape Town has never been a destination, professionals and retirees have been flocking here over the past few years – not only to stay over but also to work, and hopefully become better people too.

TEXT JOHAN VAN ZYL PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD





A mill was constructed in 1933 on the main street, across from the Koringberg station building, which has since been demolished. It's currently on the market. The white extension (behind the station sign) houses the postal agency.

Koringberg is a lovely place, yet somewhat odd. You'll find no fuel, banks, police station, sewerage system, tourist destinations, quaint spots for browsing, restaurants or coffee shops here – that's if you don't count the Desert Rose Farm Stall at the turn-off from the N7.

But everyone who appreciates vast, open vistas falls in love at first sight with the beautiful view across the Swartland wheatfields towards Piketberg. It is a landscape that compels you to notice every season: In winter, lush green waves of wheat stretch into the distance; in late spring, they transform into yellow breakers of ripe wheat ears, and in the scorching, dry summer and autumn, the apocalyptic brown stubble fields haunt your feverish dreams, in which you yearn for

a thunderstorm to bring some relief.

Wheat, sheep and cattle are farmed in the area, together with wine and export table grapes along the Berg River, about 8km north of Koringberg. In the village itself, there are only two small general stores (one with a slow ATM), operated by Bangladeshis, a basic liquor store, grain silos, and an Omnia factory and depot. Newcomers are usually horrified in spring and summer when several "Biblical plagues" strike the village – from midges, flies and stinkbugs that turn up once the wheat has been harvested, to scorpions, red romans (*haarskeerders*) and other spiders, and snakes.

"What the hell does one do here?" is the question most often heard by Koringbergers, and most have learnt to reply: "Absolutely nothing – or anything that you want to".

On the eve of the 100th birthday of both the local NG church and the town, Koringberg certainly is

a far more cosmopolitan place than 100 years ago – people from the Netherlands, Brazil, France, Malawi, Bangladesh and Malaysia have made their homes here.

Yet by far the majority of *inkommers* are still South Africans from Cape Town or other provinces – and the number are bound to increase fast, warns Johann Bester, who bought the Desert Rose Farm Stall in 2019, along with his wife, Ancil, and his sister Karin Bester. At the time they had been considering emigration. (The farm stall was voted runner-up in the radio station KFM's farm stall competition last year, and the Besters have also bought the historic Dunn's Castle Guesthouse outside Piketberg.)

The Besters, who all grew up in Theunissen in the Free State, have owned the Port St Johns River Lodge on the banks of the Umzimvubu River on the Wild Coast for more than 15 years. >



LEFT The Dutch Reformed Church celebrates its centenary in October with, among other things, a market at Desert Rose Farm Stall on 7 October. **BELOW** In Koringberg, you're officially allowed to keep up to 10 sheep or goats on your property, as well as chickens, which enjoy the green feed in winter. In Koringberg, you wake to the crowing of roosters, and at dusk, you hear sheep and sometimes cattle in the fields. And in the evening, owls... **BOTTOM** Johann Bester, his wife, Ancil, and his sister Karin have owned Desert Rose Farm Stall at the junction with the N7 since late 2019. It's currently Koringberg's only place to eat and socialise.





At 85, retired wheat farmer Stefanus Carstens is still sprightly and active, and few have experienced as much of Koringberg as he has. Here he is with his wife, Marcelle, in the lush garden on their farm Somersverdriet next to the N7.

Many *National Geographic* photographers have stayed there while capturing the annual sardine run, and the place is currently on the market.

"I get the feeling that people in the Western Cape live in a naïve bubble, because they don't understand what it's like to live without water for seven weeks. They don't know about the scale of the potholes and decay, the break-ins and beggars at traffic lights that people in other parts of the country want to avoid. All these new arrivals will place massive pressure on the infrastructure," Johann says.

On the other hand, he can't understand why people complain about newcomers who may do things differently but bring money and opportunities with them, which is an asset to any town or region.

The Besters first visited Koringberg in February 2018, and it was here that they discovered that they are descendants of the Bester brothers,

the original owners of the farm Hooggeleë just across the road from the farm stall!

A town is born

Koringberg officially came into existence on Tuesday 23 October 1923, when the Dutch Reformed Church congregation of Koringberg separated from the congregations of Moorreesburg and Hopefield at a meeting held in a grain warehouse at the former railway camp (and later railway siding) called Warren's Camp. (Apparently there had been concerns since 1909 about remotely situated members who were unable to attend worship services regularly and "had started to neglect their faith and moral values"!)

With a view to establishing a village where the church building for the new congregation could be erected, the farm Brakwater (formerly part of Hooggeleë), including Warren's Camp, was

The spring and Herrie's coin

In the 1930s, a foreman from the farm Brakwater found a silver coin with the date 29 October 1591 engraved on it in the mud of the spring on the outskirts of town. It had been engraved by hand, and the inscription commemorated the 60-year marriage of Francois van Heelen and Magrietha van der Meer in Haarlem, Holland.

In the Cape Archive, it is documented that Jan van Riebeeck's ship's doctor, Dr Pieter Van Meerhof, married Eva, a Khoi servant of Van Riebeeck's. This was also the first legal civil marriage performed at the Cape. Autshumao, the Khoi leader we learnt about at school as Herrie the beachcomber, and who was the first anti-colonial political prisoner on Robben Island, was Eva's brother. He grazed his cattle throughout the Swartland from Saldanha to the Cape, and sold livestock to Jan van Riebeeck. It appears that Eva gave the coin to Herrie, and he likely lost it in the spring near the present-day Koringberg.

As for what happened to the coin since, no one knows for sure. Martha van Wyk (see page 67) says it was supposed to be sent to Pretoria as a gift to the South African Mint, but it is reportedly now in a museum, and it also apparently has nothing to do with Herrie.





A verdant and idyllic countryside tableau: buildings on the farm Brakwater – the railway line to Bitterfontein reached this point by 1901. A railway camp (and later official railway stop) known as Warren's Camp was then established. When the community was founded, the "town" consisted almost solely of a grain shed and the stop. The farm is still owned by the church and is rented out.

purchased from Jewish merchant Max Kahn for £11 000 (about R22 000 at the time). Besides the railway siding, Brakwater had another significant asset: a natural spring that was the only sustainable water source in the area.

The farmers themselves built the church (hall) and parsonage within 18 months. In November 1924, led by the first minister, Reverend Anton Stegmann, a renowned Springbok wing, the town was laid out with 304 erven, a market square, a church square, school grounds and several streets that were sold at a public auction in September 1925.

In the more than 30 years before Koringberg obtained a local council in 1956, it was literally a church village managed by the church council but without enforceable, legal authority, explains Stefanus Carstens, a native of the district who learnt to write with chalk on slate here in 1946. Along with nine classmates, he matriculated at

the long-since closed Hoërskool Jan Malan in 1957. Oom Stefanus farmed in the district from 1961 but is now retired (his son-in-law is in charge of farming operations on the farms Looiersvlei and Somersverdriet).

"In those early years, the church served as policeman, magistrate and local council responsible for providing sanitation and water, laying and repairing streets, managing grazing rights, and handling all such matters," he says. "It was actually a messy story... Almost everyone kept animals – pigs, sheep, chickens and a dairy cow that grazed everywhere on the streets, often becoming a burden and an obstacle – but the church council did not have the power to take action against the owners."

Oom Stefanus says water scarcity was also a problem from day one, "because no matter what anyone tells you, there is no water in Koringberg that is not brackish", and

in those days there were hardly any boreholes. In fact, it is unthinkable that they established a town in a place with only one spring that wasn't even flowing particularly strongly. (Read "The spring and Herrie's coin" on opposite page.)

For decades, the villagers were largely dependent on rainwater collected during the rainy season, "but with those first thatched-roof houses, you couldn't collect water, of course," and that's why each house also had a water cart, pulled by two horses, that you would fill up at the spring", Oom Stefanus explains. It was only on 30 January 1967, after the Voëlsvlei Water Scheme came into operation, that the villagers could turn on their water taps. Over time, the spring fell into disuse.

The golden years

Like almost all platteland towns, the prosperity of Koringberg was closely linked to the growth of the >

MY TOWN

farming community, the church and the school. The farms were inhabited by large families, ensuring that the church was packed on Sundays. Thanks to the dedication of Rev Jan Malan, who served as the local minister from 1931 to 1939 and again from 1946 to 1951, the primary school became a secondary school in 1937 and a high school in 1949.

“The school was extended three times over the years,” says Oom Stefanus, and as increasing numbers of farm schools in the region closed, the number of pupils in the town grew to 240. Four buses would drive children in daily

This building on the farm Bakoond used to be a farm school, which closed in 1927, but was later used for church services. The children themselves carried all the school benches from the farm to the school in the village – all of 3,5 km!

from Somersverdriet, Bakoond, Pampoenkraal and Sanddrift.

“Business and social life in Koringberg were very lively,” he recalls. “And many trains ran through here, sometimes up to 20 per day. Everything was transported by rail back then: milk, cream, sheep, cattle, wheat, hay, wool... There were two decent general dealers who received their stock by train, two hardware stores, shoemakers, a mill, a bank and fuel pumps... At one stage there was an active Landsdiens Club, a badminton and cricket club, and a VLV (Women's Agricultural Association) branch. The school organised bazaars, fruit festivals, sports days, treasure hunts and movie nights. Bands came to play, and there was dancing...”

The Koringberg Farmers' Association was established in the

community hall on 17 August 1955 and soon obtained the approval of the church council to establish a town council. On 20 May 1963, on the eve of the town's 40th anniversary, the era of kerosene lamps and candles in Koringberg came to an end when Eskom switched on the electricity, nearly four years before the town would have access to tap water. The main street was already tarred in 1963, but the road leading to the N7 was only tarred in 1971.

R10 plots halt depopulation

Economic changes after World War II, the mechanisation of agriculture, ever larger farms with fewer and fewer families on them, the rapid depopulation of the platteland “and the stork finding few homes in the municipality to visit” >



Koringberg, photographed in January, from the hiking trail starting on the farm Hooggeleë. The “mountain” on the left ensures the village is shaded earlier in the height of summer.



Koringberg in early June, with the first green wheat shoots starting to show.



In a nutshell

Distance from the big city?

Koringberg lies 118 km from Cape Town, 6 km from the N7, which connects the Mother City with Namibia. The closest neighbouring towns are Moorreesburg (19 km), Piketberg (26 km), Riebeek West (46 km), Hopefield (49 km), Riebeek Kasteel (52 km) and Malmesbury (53 km). Large sections of the N7 are being widened, which, upon completion in 2024, will reduce the travel time to and from Cape Town to about one hour.

Average rainfall

The Swartland is a winter-rainfall area that receives an average of 435 mm of rain per year, but Koringberg is drier, receiving an average rainfall of about 300 mm. Since it was established, the town has survived several droughts, even though the underground water is mostly brackish.

Average temperature

Koringberg gets hot in summer, with maximum temperatures from the low to high thirties (and the low forties during heat waves) in December, January, February and often March. Winters –

from June to August – are mostly lovely and sunny unless it's raining, but even then the daytime temperature ranges between 6°C and 22°C. We aren't aware of anyone experiencing frost here.

Facilities

There are two general dealerships, both run by friendly men from Bangladesh, along with a basic liquor store. The only place you will currently find something to eat and drink is at Desert Rose Farm Stall 6 km from the town at the turnoff from the N7.

Nearest hospitals, retirement facilities and schools

There are no doctors, dentists or hospitals, but there is a clinic that is open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The closest state hospitals are the Radie Kotze Hospital in Piketberg (25 km) and the Swartland Hospital in Malmesbury (53 km). A new private hospital, Crestcare Malmesbury, will open in the middle of next year at De Zwartland Werf, a development under construction on the outskirts of town. This project includes offices, apartments and a shopping centre which should be completed by next October.

There is a primary school in Koringberg and there are good schools in Moorreesburg and Piketberg.

Nearest Woolies

The closest Woolworths Food is 53 km away at De Korenvlj Lifestyle Centre in Malmesbury.

Municipality

Koringberg is part of the Swartland municipality, which incorporates the towns of Abbotsdale, Chatsworth, Darling, Kalbaskraal, Malmesbury, Moorreesburg, Riebeek Kasteel, Riebeek West, Riverlands and Yzerfontein. The municipality is regarded as one of the five best in South Africa. (We recently experienced this ourselves when a team from the municipality arrived within an hour after our phone call and worked tirelessly from 16:00 to 20:00 to restore our water supply.)

General information

Visit swartlandtourism.co.za for general information about activities, restaurants, businesses and accommodation in and around Koringberg. ☎ 022 487 1133

caused the number of pupils to decline to such an extent that the school was downgraded to a primary school by the end of 1969. When Mr PW Dreyer was appointed principal in 1970, there were 52 children and three teachers at the school, but by the end of 1981 only 14 children and one teacher remained. On Friday 22 January 1982, *Die Burger* reported on its front page that Koringberg Primary School had been closed by the Cape Department of Education the previous day because only the school principal – and no children – had arrived for the new school year.

This almost sounded the death knell for the town – until the NG Church congregation came up with a clever plan in 1984 to sell 31 plots of land for a mere R10 each, with the condition that you had to build within two years (to prevent property speculation), a requirement that was eventually not enforced. The interest was overwhelming and more than 500 applications were reportedly received. The project was so successful that the municipality decided to proceed with the second



The once-dilapidated Laerskool Koringberg (and former Hoërskool Jan Malan) shut its doors in 1982 but has been transformed into self-catering units for retreats – with a shared kitchen, a yoga studio, a tennis court and, soon, a swimming pool.

What does property cost?

Times are tough economically, which means the property market is considerably quieter, but a fair number of properties, particularly stands, have changed hands over the past five years. *Platteland* approached two estate agents who do business in Koringberg and chose three of our favourite available properties from each one.

Contact **Stephanie White** from EXP South Africa Realty about this trio of properties
expsouthafrica.co.za (type “Koringberg” into the search bar) stephanie.white@expsouthafrica.co.za
 084 758 9467



R950 000

This 1 661 m² corner property is situated in Karee Street on the outskirts of town and offers good views and a partially completed house.



R980 000

This undeveloped 3 320 m² corner stand in the upper village already has a municipal water supply, along with several trees and a lovely view.



R2,2 million

Platteland's favourite building in the town is the lovely but rundown Ou Meulhuis, a heritage building (a section of it houses the postal agency). It is situated on a 2 242 m² property with business rights.



Janette de Villiers, founder of the production company Groundglass and owner of the The Electric juice bar and café in Cape Town, is the driving force behind the restoration of the old school in Koringberg. She has owned a house in the village since 1997 and plans to retire here in a few years.

phase – this time the plots cost R1000 each, and many new houses were built.

Rejuvenation begins

But as Oom Stefanus remembers it, it was only in the period from 1990 to 1995, when he was renting the church's farm, Brakwater, that "people from outside seriously started to arrive, people who mostly did not become part of the community to the same extent as before."

Among those who have owned a house in Koringberg for the longest time is Janette de Villiers, founder and executive producer of the production company Groundglass (groundglass.co.za) and owner of the bar-café The Electric in Cape Town. Janette moved to Cape Town from Johannesburg in 1996 following a hijacking, but couldn't afford to buy somewhere to live. She decided rather to rent, and purchase something more affordable in the platteland. Over weekends she explored towns such as Malmesbury and Riebeeck-Kasteel, until one

Sunday in 1997, when she spotted a dilapidated house in a catalogue at an estate agency in Riebeeck West. Her interest was immediately met with: "Oh no, you don't want to go there, it's a place called Koringberg; there's absolutely nothing there!"

"But this is exactly what I am looking for!" was Janette's reply. She and a few friends drove through to Koringberg right away. The house was appallingly dirty and rundown, but the entire front garden was full of sweet peas. "The agent almost fell on his back when I phoned him and said I was buying it, without seeing the rest of the house or the town."

Over the years, Janette has slowly made her house "in the middle of nowhere", but only an hour from the city, more livable. It quickly became a secret weekend and holiday retreat for her and her family and friends.

"I'm still so surprised when I get to the village on a Friday night after a crazy work week and feel completely frazzled, but by the time I have walked around my garden I am unbelievably calm and grounded. By Monday I've solved all the world's problems! >

Contact **Riaan Viljoen** from Home & Hectare Real Estate about the following three properties
homeandhectare.com
 (type "Koringberg" into the search bar) 📧 riaan.viljoen@homeandhectare.com
 ☎ 082 822 2798



R300 000

This is an undeveloped 1 382 m² stand at the bottom of town with lovely views.



R420 000

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R3,2 million

This historic four-bedroom home is positioned on a 8 000 m² property with good views. Also included are a small flat, a garage, two storerooms, a large barn, a chicken coop and a donkey shed.

MY TOWN

"The soil and extreme heat have their challenges, but I have learned how to garden and grow food and flowers in an organic environment. I have bee hives and can harvest my own honey. *Ek kan nou baie goeie Afrikaans praat, somtyds met 'n Swartland-bry!* This place really grounds me like nowhere else in the world."

Twelve years ago, Janette filmed a music video at the dilapidated old school when it still looked like the set of a horror movie, with no ceilings, and bats flying everywhere. She remembers telling the producer she would one day buy the place. When Janette decided to spend the lockdown in Koringberg, she bumped into the previous owner of the school while out jogging one morning and bought the property not long afterwards.

After extensive restoration work, the classrooms, now with en-suite bathrooms, are rented out as

separate self-catering units (or the entire school as a group booking), and yoga classes and retreats are offered. The vegetable garden supplies fruit and vegetables to The Electric. A rooster and hen have recently moved in, and in the future, a swimming pool will provide relief during the hot summers. Residents often hit a few balls on the slightly damaged but decent tennis court.

MORNE AND JULIE COETZER, who own the self-catering home Koring Villa, a popular weekend escape for tired city dwellers, must be the only residents who fell in love with Koringberg during the height of summer. Generally, houses sell like hotcakes in winter, when the wheatfields are bright green and the peaks of the distant mountains are sometimes covered in snow.

Morne is the founder and owner of ProGolf Africa Safaris

(progolfsafaris.com), which specialise in luxury golf safari packages for the US market, and Julie is an independent travel consultant who until recently had her own corporate travel agency. They first came to Koringberg to visit friends at their weekend home and immediately loved the rural feeling.

"We reached a stage in our lives where we simply couldn't afford a house – or the restoration work – in Cape Town's southern suburbs. Because we didn't have children, I had always dreamt of owning a matriarchal home in the platteland where all our siblings' children would be welcomed," says Julie.

They looked at a few houses but didn't find what they were looking for. Koringberg was then forgotten until they camped at Klein-Tafelberg a year later, and Julie rediscovered the photos of the Koringberg houses on her phone. She was about to



ABOVE a section of the delightful, constantly changing garden at Koring Villa, a self-catering house in the village. It is fully booked every weekend.

RIGHT Morne and Julie Coetzer (with Lilybet), owners of Koring Villa, were compelled by Covid-19 to become full-time residents. But then they also found an outlet for all their creativity. The two houses and gardens keep getting ever more beautiful, and Morne also brews his own brandy, called Nocturne.



delete them, but confessed to Morne that she had a strange feeling that Koringberg was calling her – maybe they should go and look again.

“It was another scorching day. Absolutely nothing had changed in a year, except that the house, which we had meanwhile named Koring Villa, was for sale.” They didn’t waste any time. The sale was finalised in November 2015, and that Christmas they handed out keys to the entire family before they moved in on Valentine’s Day 2016. The Coetzers are both talented home-makers; Morne loves gardening, and they are continuously modifying the property with its many outdoor relaxation areas. For six months they spent every weekend here, and when they later listed the property on Airbnb, they were surprised when it was fully booked every weekend.

“That’s what makes Koringberg so wonderful: The people who come here on weekends are mostly

families or friends who just want to do nothing together and relax. Most of them don’t want to go out and see other people, except maybe to take a little walk. They simply seek a safe, peaceful environment where they can gather around the swimming pool and braai, play table tennis or boules or darts, and escape from the daily realities of the city and the suburbs – and, of course, from load shedding.” (Koring Villa has solar power and good Wi-Fi, but no television.)

The Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the Coetzers’ businesses and in May 2020 they decided to sell their house in Chelsea, Diep River, build a house in Koringberg, and move here permanently. Morne, a grandson of late veteran actress Sann de Lange, does still have to go to the office in Durbanville on Mondays and Tuesdays, but he has also set up a boutique distillery at the house



Koringberg is not short of characters, but our favourite is Anna Kitaar, who abandoned both the bottle and the guitar a few years ago. These days, you don’t see (or hear) Anna all that often. In her arms is a kitten named Jay Z.

Farm breakaway from the hustle and bustle of the city life and experience a little piece of heaven. Come and relax at Southkloof self-catering guesthouse situated on the farm Southkloof within 20 km from Moorreesburg, Koringberg district and Piketberg and 100 km from Cape Town. It is a beautiful working farm, run by father and son.

We offer guests a taste of farm life (if they wish to), peaceful walks, beautiful scenery, sunset/sunrise, night sky that will have any star gazer dancing with delight, the opportunity to do absolute nothing or a variety of activities within close proximity – from wine tasting to mountain bike trails, golf course, horse riding, to museums or other small towns.

Bring your own bicycles and walking shoes to explore the farm.

We are child-friendly, sorry not pet-friendly.

LOAD SHEDDING: we do have an inverter system with a 5 kw battery, so no worries. Free WiFi.

The house is fully equipped, just bring food and clothing. Inside and outside braai, 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, kitchen, living room with working station and a sleeper couch.

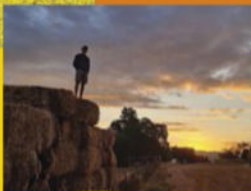
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Southkloof

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E-mail: admin@southkloof.co.za



MY TOWN

where he makes his own brandy, called Nocturne.

“Covid changed many things,” says Julie. “We basically had to start a totally new life, and I can honestly say I have never been as happy as I am now. It feels as if I lost so many years of my life to the corporate world and focusing on insignificant things. For years I convinced myself that I could barely boil an egg, but now I’m learning to cook, often with vegetables we harvest from the garden; I’m discovering my artistic side; my chickens lay nine eggs for me every day... It also feels as though we’ve truly become part of a community where people care about one another, as it used to be in the old days. One really meets and befriends a different class of people here. I think it’s because we are learning how simple life can be.”

SOUTH AFRICAN LAWYER Stephen Benade (stephenbenade.co.za) and Brazilian event planner and designer Washington Mendes Filho, whom he married in 2006, met in London, where Stephen had worked for 12 years before they moved to Brazil in 2013. There they opened a restaurant in Washington’s home town, Uberlândia. Stephen had always wanted to plant an edible garden and, influenced by Jamie Oliver, fell in love with the garden-to-table concept. This won their restaurant something of an underground cult status among the Brazilian glitterati, earning Stephen newspaper and television coverage. But after three years the challenges, including the administrative red tape, became too stressful, and Stephen’s mother in Cape Town wasn’t in the best of health.

They moved to the Mother City in 2016 and Stephen’s mom passed away in 2019. When Covid hit, they decided to move somewhere within a 150km radius of Cape Town and considered places such as Wolseley, Wellington and Porterville. But then they saw drone footage of the



The friendly Koringbergers on our cover are the Brazilian-born event planner Washington Mendes Filho and his South African better half, Cape Town advocate Stephen Benade, in their lush vegetable garden. They have lived in the village since 2020.

property in Koringberg where they now live. They came to take a look on Saturday, made an offer on Sunday, and moved to Koringberg in August 2020 without knowing a single person.

“We expected a desert in terms of our social and cultural existence, and that was probably the biggest surprise: the quality of the people you find here.”

They laughingly admit that they thought they would be the only gays in the village, and that they might not be accepted by the more conservative Afrikaans culture.

When they asked the estate agent how the town would react to a gay couple, they were assured that they would feel very much at home and welcomed. Only later did they find out that Koringberg is jokingly referred to as the gay capital of the Swartland because there are already 13 same-sex couples living here.

“This place truly has a unique

sense of community not found in neighbouring towns,” says Washington. “People accept one another as they are.”

Stephen adds, “The other thing is that the gays in this village are influential, and they do things that have a real impact on the town. But this influence is because Koringberg has not felt homophobic for a long time and the gays enjoy tremendous support from the straight community.”

You and I together

Outside Linda de Klerk’s house in Leeubekkie Street, Rautenville, the headquarters of the non-profit organisation Ek n Jy, a large banner flutters in the wind to remind Rautenville’s children of the touch rugby and netball practice taking place this afternoon.

This organisation, which focuses on the needs of the children,

elderly and pets of the Koringberg community, was established in 2020 by Cecilia Mackay, Elizabeth (Rosie) de Klerk, and Linda to develop the town's children through sports (touch rugby, netball, street cricket and chess).

The elderly are also given blankets and meals; animals are sterilised; and they run an annual Santa's Shoebox project. During the Covid-19 lockdown, Ek n Jy also distributed food parcels and provided cloth masks and beanies for the kids – all with the help of donors and volunteers.

“But it actually started even further back when Natanya [Israel, Cecilia's wife] was still working at Disney and one year sponsored a lot of toys that we wrapped up. Celi, with all her tattoos, dressed up as Santa Claus, and we handed out the gifts,” Rosie remembers. She used to work as a housekeeper for the late rugby hero Chester Williams before becoming Cecilia and Natanya's right hand in Koringberg.

The management of Ek n Jy find it

heartbreaking how much emerging talent there is in the town, and yet few parents are involved in their children's lives. “The children go from house to house personally to invite each parent, but very few of them ever attend the practices or the big finals.”

This doesn't discourage her, says Linda, whose entire family is involved in all of Ek n Jy's gatherings. “This is my birthplace, and I know it as a town where everyone knows one another and gets along. When I was a child, we were not allowed in the white part of town, but since people from outside started coming in, it's as though everyone is welcome everywhere now.

“For us, this is the work of the heart: Our reward is seeing the positive impact that our projects have on the lives of the children and how they cultivate the right attitude.”

Visit eknjy.co.za for more information on their projects and how you can help, or phone ☎ 083 226 6099.

Satisfied for a century

In one of the “greetings messages” in *NG Gemeente Koringberg 1923-1973*, which was published during the half-centenary celebrations in 1973, Dr TN du Toit writes: “For me personally, the humility of Koringberg is outstanding. It's not just the humility of the fields and the lands, but the people of the town and farms are not boastful or seeking to be proud of anything. They embrace the modesty of the town and its surroundings and do not compare it with neighbouring towns or with Cape Town. They are content people, satisfied with what they have. They do not strive for grand things but are perfectly happy with their circumstances. And it is this humility that struck me from the very first day I arrived there. It is a rare quality in people, but in Koringberg it is an everyday thing. People are warm and caring, and they accept one another as they are.”

This could just as well have been written in 2023. >



The three purpose-driven angels behind Ek n Jy, an organisation that takes care of Koringberg's children, elderly and pets: Linda de Klerk, Cecilia Mackay and Rosie de Klerk.

Meet the people



Cokes Geldenhuys

Gardener and retired librarian

In October, Cokes will have been living in Koringberg for only nine years, yet he understands better than most people how to create the most beautiful garden in this harsh climate.

"Forget about waterwise – I've learnt that this means that you *must* be wise about watering these plants for the first two years," he jokes. "Save yourself many tears by planting what grows in the renosterveld, and pay extra attention to the more delicate plants."

He regularly visited his two sons in Cape Town, and they would go on drives together. Then, one day in 2012, they happened to visit Koringberg.

"I was happy in Parys – you could even say my level of satisfaction was so high that it was slightly annoying. Then I put my house in the market and went on holiday to Namibia. When I returned, I no longer had a house. That's how I ended up here in 2014."

Cokes sighs and starts to laugh. "Of course this was just as the bad drought started. And because I had experienced frost in Parys, I'd only thought to ask how cold the winters are here. No one warned me that I'd die in summer!"

All that he misses badly in Koringberg are his children and their families, his own family and his friends, and sometimes wandering from shop to shop with his dog and talking nonsense. "This garden is my saving grace."

Bregda and Teubes Mostert

Owners of the farm Hooggeleë and Die Ark campsite

Teubes, a native of Koringberg who started school here in Sub a in 1968 (and whose father was one of the first babies to be christened in the local church), and Bregda, who "immigrated from a cattle farm between Ladysmith and Newcastle", are the epitome of good Samaritans. Over the years, they have been involved in various capacities in the NG church, and on Sundays, Bregda (on guitar) and Teubes (on tambourine) lead the "praise and worship" services.

There are several affordable accommodation options on their farm, Hooggeleë, which originally included the farm Brakwater, where Koringberg was founded. On offer are cottages as well as the campsite Die Ark, which consists of stands, backpackers' lodgings and a reception venue.

Although Koringberg has changed over the years, Teubes and Bregda say it remains a wonderful community.

"When our daughter Renée (then aged 3) was diagnosed with cancer in 1993 – Hein was then 5 and Philip 1 – for a period of nine months, 24/7, either one of us was permanently with her at the hospital in Cape Town. A constant stream of rusks and readymade food arrived, keeping the household going. We experienced this for a second time in 2004 when our house burnt down and an entire army of people turned up to help. When the pawpaw hits the fan, these are the people who will appear at 03:00 in the morning to help you."

Bregda says Koringberg has always been a simple and relatively poor place, but a stream of *inkommers* have introduced funds to the town, improving the houses and gardens, and bringing fresh energy with them. "Although we don't live in the town, we still experienced it as a community, though this is often via the extremely active WhatsApp group."

Once upon a time they knew everyone, says Teubes, and he now finds it strange to drive through the town and not have any idea who lives in many of the houses. "There used to be so many activities that brought the community together. Whenever a farmer built a new shed, there would be a celebration. This is why Bregda has started the tradition of having tea on Sundays after the service. We must have a chance to talk about the week that has gone by, the week that lies ahead, and the rain – always the rain."





Martha van Wyk

Ex-resident and former postal agency and municipal representative

At the retirement home Huis Moorrees in the neighbouring town of Moorreesburg, Martha van Wyk (80) is sitting in the living room just outside her small, cluttered room, where she still happily sews during the day. But she is extremely quiet for a woman who, for 20 years, much like the Pied Piper of Hamelin with his flute, had the ability to captivate Koringberg residents with her wonderful stories, especially when you called on a Wednesday with a request for the municipal truck to come drain your septic tank. (The old town still does not have a sewerage system, unlike the RDP development that was built in the early 2000s.)

For this unpleasant request, you had to knock on the door of Martha and Sylvie van Rooi at the postal agency, which also serves as the municipal office.

Martha reminds one somewhat of the character Mietie in the 1980s TV series *Koöperasiestories* and is always ready with a good story or a plan of some kind. "In the early days, the late Hillary Williams and I could easily earn R500 on Fridays when we sold pancakes at the Post Office – and you know, the ingredients cost just R45, plus the gas. At one stage I was selling 200 bottles of ginger beer each week at R8 a bottle, even to homes as far afield as Wittewater. The whole community would bring us their products – crochetwork and knitting, nets, rusks, biscuits – and we would sell these on their behalf. I even had a candy floss machine! In the Post Office!"

She recalls that the farming community accepted her right away, and how she enjoyed living in a rented house on Looiersvlei, a stone's throw from the town, for almost 21 years. "Back then there were weekly cattle auctions for which the women prepared food, tour groups from Cape Town would arrive regularly... I find it interesting how those old-fashioned ideas slowly changed to become what we experience today. The people are just as lovely and interesting, but you don't feel, like you did in the old days, that you know them inside out."

Sylvie van Rooi

Postal agency and municipal representative

In the tiny postal agency situated in a section of the Ou Meul, Sylvie says she started her Sub A school year in Koringberg and never left since. "Koringberg is a quiet, peaceful place where everyone knows everyone. Even if I spot you walking 2 km away, I will recognize you by your gait," she laughs. "The folks here are friendly, they greet one another and ask how things are going. Of course there are those in the area who look down on the town and say we come from the farm. My response is that we may be from the farm, but just look at the class of people who are coming to live on the farm: doctors and artists and producers and writers... What do you have to show for yourselves? Along with Omnia, the new arrivals have also created more opportunities for domestic helpers and gardeners."

The only thing that bugs her is the increasing crime level in town. "Oh yes, how could I forget: also, the terrible heat in summer and the midges and stink bugs that descend on us in spring and at harvest time." >



Meet the people

Sheikh Mubin Sahadat and Johirul Sheikh

Managers: Koringberg Spaza

It's not hard to tell when the Bangladeshi men who take turns to run the Koringberg Spaza shop are feeling homesick. They play melancholic music that transports listeners to exotic and distant places. Johirul came to South Africa from Bashabari in 2017, and Sahadat from Mollakandi in 2019 (both places are in the Madaripur district of Bangladesh). They work for the shop's owner and were sent here. Although they didn't come to Koringberg by choice, they are both happy and say they love how quiet it is. "The hours here are from 07:00 to 19:00 or maybe 20:00 in summer, but in Cape Town you'd have to stay open until 22:00, 23:00, even midnight, for the same pay. And in Europe the problems are much worse than here."

Sahadat is frank about the reason he came to South Africa: "I'm here because of a political problem. Because I do not support the ruling party, they began to target not only me but also harassed my family."

They miss their family and friends. "But we have Facebook and WhatsApp and YouTube. And quiet, quiet nights."



John and Nikki Loxton

Owners of Vleidam Guest Farm

Nikki and John, who is a former councillor in the Swartland municipality with nine Comrades marathons under his belt, bought Vleidam in 2008 with money they had saved over several years. The farm is situated a stone's throw from the town. John farms with wheat and sheep periodically, while in other years the Loxtons rent out the land and use the income to improve their guest accommodation. How ironic, because when they heard in the early 1980s about the stands that the church in Koringberg was selling for R10, they thought: But who would want to live in such a desolate little place?

Nikki has spent the past four years restoring four old buildings on the farm, which they now market as self-catering accommodation. They are amazed that these houses are fully booked almost every weekend. "Modern, sophisticated people from Cape Town, tired of the pace of the city, come here to relax. Most of them want to do nothing, just stare at the open landscape and the mountains. They don't want to see other people. They yearn for the peace and quiet we can offer, and they want to spend time together."

Says John: "Koringberg was always a simple town where everyone knew one another, but it has changed a lot, and that very strong sense of community has gone. You do still experience it at church, but people who have weekend homes here want to spend their weekends resting, and most of the new arrivals are not churchgoers. It's a worldwide phenomenon not unique to Koringberg."

Our cover stars!

The *Platteland* head office in Koringberg works something like a home industry, and many friends and residents have acted as models on the cover of the magazine.



Writer **Anna Kemp**, formerly from Durban, bought her first house in the town in 2016, and in May 2017 exchanged it for a larger house where she, her daughter, Alida, and their extended family of animals live (this cover photograph was shot there).



Alan Dove is a former resident of Koringberg, whereas artist **Pippa Lea Pennington** moved here from Durban in 2016. She has lived and worked here since. *(Ironically, Pippa is posing with a loaf of bread, which she can't eat as she is gluten-intolerant! – Eds)*



Rodney van Breda is a former resident who lived in Koringberg between 1997 and 2021.



Alida Kemp has lived in Koringberg since 2018 with her mother, Anna, as well as five horses, four dogs and three cats.



Barbara Malaisé, *Platteland's* English proofreader, and her French husband, Eric, bought a weekend-and-holiday home in Koringberg in 2006. Since the lockdown, they have lived here full time but they also own a house in Cape Town.



In 2015, photographer **Ian Goodes** and data analyst and poet **Martina Kloppe**, who are *Platteland's* neighbours, bought a weekend house. In July 2021, they moved to Koringberg permanently, after buying a bigger house. >

Yzerfontein

Darling

Moorreesburg
& Koringberg

Riebeek Valley

Malmesbury

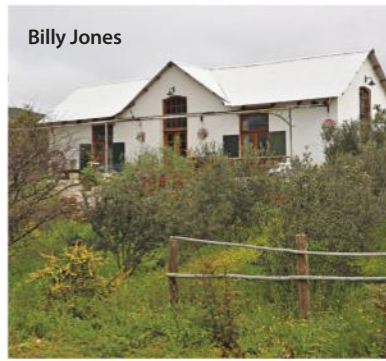


Arrive as strangers, but rest assured that you'll leave as friends. The genuine warmth and hospitality of the people, combined with the rich cultural heritage, mouthwatering food and wine, and endless outdoor activities, make the Swartland an unforgettable destination that will capture your heart and leave you longing for more. Welcome to paradise!

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Billy Jones



Die Ark, Hooggeleë



The entrance to the hiking trail along the railway line. There's also a route on Hooggeleë with beautiful views.

Eat, drink and enjoy!

BROWSE, SHOP AND BE ACTIVE

Enjoy the area on foot or bicycle

Doing nothing is perfectly acceptable in Koringberg, but you can get your daily exercise by walking through the town or along the service road beside the railway line. Or try the lovely walking trail that starts on the farm Hooggeleë and takes you through fields and patches of renosterveld, offering great views along the way (on clear days you will see Table Mountain and the sparkling waters of the West Coast). Because the trail runs across private farmland, you'll need to ask permission – and that way, the farm watch can be informed. 📞 083 597 0091 (Bregda).

View or buy art (by appointment)

At least three artists live and work in Koringberg and their work can be viewed and purchased by appointment.

• **Pippa Lea Pennington** finds most of her inspiration in nature: succulents and aloes, trees, landscapes and still lives,

as well as portraits in oil, watercolours, pastels, ink and crayons. 📧 @pippa.lea.pennington 📧 pippa.lea.p@gmail.com (Also see page 69 and page 136.)

• **Leon Potgieter** makes modern, sometimes wonderfully absurd, pieces out of clay. 📧 potterbakker.co.za 📧 Leon Potterbakker 📧 info@potterbakker.co.za 📞 082 955 6547

• **Billy Jones**, who works under the name WF Jones, started painting 40 years ago. "I paint from the heart; what you see is what you get," he says:

📧 wf-jones-art.company.site

📧 wfjonesart@gmail.com

📞 071 608 2728 (Billy or Riana)

They also offer accommodation, which is listed as Koringberg Siding on 📧 lekkeslaap.co.za.

Taste local wine

• Travelling by car, you will find the farm **Nieuwedrift** 16km outside Koringberg (and 9km south of Piketberg) on the right-hand side of the N7. The seventh

generation of the Mostert family have been making delicious Chenin Blanc, Shiraz, Rosé and MCC here since 2001. They also host weddings, and the farm has a restaurant (09:30-15:00 on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays; to 21:00 on Fridays and 17:00 on Saturdays; closed Mondays and Tuesdays), which is especially popular for its pizzas.

📧 nieuwedrift.co.za 📧 Nieuwedrift Wine Estate 📧 nieuwedritwine.estate@gmail.com 📞 082 921 6015 (Carla) or 064 607 0041

• Just 3 km further along, across the Berg River, lies **Org de Rac** Organic Wine Estate, where you can taste and buy wine as well as olive oil. They also have a restaurant with a small menu (panini, chips, pizza, quiche, oysters and snack platters including bread, cheese, meat, fruit and dipping sauces). It is open from 09:00 to 17:00, Mondays to Fridays, and 10:00 to 15:00 on Saturdays.

📧 orgderac.com 📧 Org de Rac Wine Estate 📞 022 913 2397/3923 >

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waterbuck, red
hartebeest, porcupine,
aardvark, jackal
and occasionally
leopard.**

Stand 138

(previously stands 16 & 17)

Size of house: 155.44 m² plus verandah

Garage/cottage: 36 m²

Loft rooms: 31.5 m² (each)

Situated 28 km outside of Vaalwater
230 km from Pretoria

The estate is extremely well run and maintained by a strong, active HOA.

Situated on a double stand with 1 title deed, and 1 levy each month. No other house can be built next to, in front of or behind stand 138. Exceptionally well built house with no outstanding levies and no bond. Face brick and aluminum window frames mean no external maintenance. Pitched roof with Harvey tile exterior and double volume inside with thatch ceiling and wooden beams.

Comprises: **2 extra-large bedrooms and bathrooms**, main en-suite. The floors are terracotta tiles. The main living area has double doors opening onto the verandah. The 2nd bedroom has a strongroom, which contains the **solar system** for the lights/fridge. **The stove and 2 geysers are gas.**

2 loft rooms above the bedrooms with one set of stairs. The garage is tiled, with a tiled bathroom with gas geyser, a wooden front door and large windows.

There is a **paved braai circle** in front of the house and a **thatch lapa** in a bushy and rocky section next to the house. The 2 main rivers are within walking distance.

Fully fenced perimeter with no internal fences. The farm is 1550 ha with only 35 houses. The sand roads are kept in top notch condition. There are 4 dams. The 12th AGM has just been held. **Borehole water.** Nyathi has its **own security** staff and trained tracker dogs. Security staff are permanently on site and patrol at night. There is a well-maintained **runway** for owners to fly in.

Price: R2 150 000,00

**Contact Alan 078 803 9599 or
Susanna 072 134 9466**



Olive Grove



Koring Villa



Desert Rose-paastal

MOM, I'M HUNGRY!

Currently there are no restaurants in Koringberg but there's always something new to be found at the cheerful Desert Rose Farm Stall 6 km outside the town at the turnoff from the N7. Since Karin Bester, her brother Johann and his wife, Ancil, took over the reins here, they have expanded the gift shop, supermarket and deli sections, and you can buy meat (we are big fans of their home-made droëwors, biltong and cabanossi), cheese and fresh bread on certain days. The licensed restaurant has indoor and outdoor seating for 60, and the menu offers breakfasts, filled pancakes, light lunches (such as schnitzel, pies, ribs with chips or salad), large scones, toasted sandwiches, vetkoek, desserts and cake. Children and pets are welcome – there is plenty of space for playing and climbing. A monthly market takes place during spring and summer – keep an eye on their Facebook page. Next on the list... possibly a small nursery.

📍 desertrosefarmstall.co.za
 📱 Desert Rose Farm Stall
 📧 info@desertrosefarmstall.co.za
 ☎ 083 484 2004 (Karin)

ACCOMMODATION

There's an abundance of weekend and holiday accommodation in and around the town – most are listed at 📍 booking.com, safariNOW.com and airbnb.com.

• **Rent a house for a group** One of *Platteland's* favourites is Julie and Morne Coetzer's Koring Villa, a beautiful, well-equipped house that sleeps 8 adults.

📍 koringvilla.co.za Other good choices are Pieter and Ennerien Aucamp's self-catering Bella Vista and La Belle Vie – visit 📍 village-living.co.za or phone Ennerien on ☎ 084 307 3855.

• **Rent a cottage** We are crazy about Olive Grove Cottage 📍 airbnb.com, booking.com and lekkeslaap.co.za, which belongs to Stephen Benade and Washington Mendes Filho, this edition's

cover models. ☎ 063 498 0025

• **Rent a house on a farm** The Loxtons of Vleidam Guest Farm have restored four old buildings a stone's throw from the village as self-catering accommodation with a lovely view. ☎ 074 217 0027 (Christine Koch)

📱 Vleidam Guest Farm

• **Rent an en-suite room** (or an entire school) Stay over in the Ou Skool in Impala Street. Each has an en-suite bathroom. (They can also welcome group bookings.) Book at 📍 airbnb.com or phone ☎ 072 784 9263

📱 @die_ou_skool

• **Go camping** Teubus and Bregda Mostert's farm Hooggeleë, situated about 1,8 km after you have taken the Koringberg turnoff, is where you will find **Die Ark**, a small campsite for short and long stays, as well as basic backpackers' lodging, both with neat ablution facilities. Meals are available.

📱 Die Ark (Hooggeleë, Koringberg, Western Cape) ☎ 083 597 0091 📱



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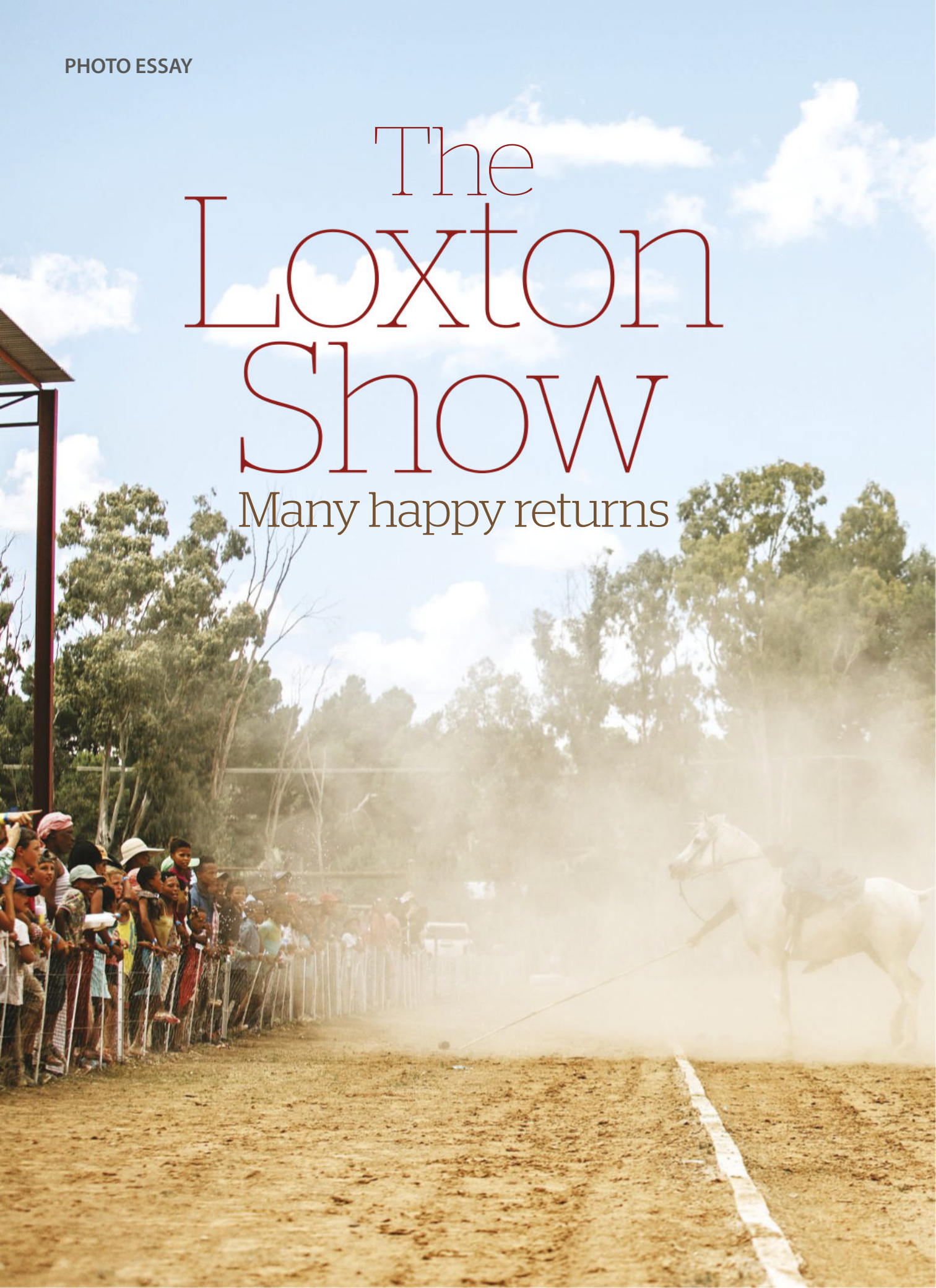


website www.so.co.za

PHOTO ESSAY

The Loxton Show

Many happy returns



The Loxton Show is renowned and notorious for three things:
The Loxton July horse races, the heat of the Karoo and plenty of dust.
This is why, at the end of the show, people always say they won't be
back. Yet somehow *everyone* returns the following December.

TEXT AND PHOTOS WILLEM VAN DER BERG





My first visit to the Loxton Show was in December 2005. It wasn't far from where I stayed that

year. I was living in the farmhouse at Gileamskuile and working on the 300 wind pumps in the area.

It was hot on show day. The dust that was hanging over everything offered a degree of protection against the sun. During the motorbike race at the showgrounds, I rode right over Joe van Wyk, who had fallen in front of me. I couldn't see him in all that dust, but afterwards everyone got a chance to witness the black rubber marks on his chest.

That evening, I took the co-op manager's daughter to the dance being held at Jakhalsdans. It was a bad experience for us both because I couldn't dance. I wondered whether, with my two

left feet, I'd ever manage to get a girl. That was when I decided all the heat and dust and humiliation just weren't worth a bit of motorcycling, and that would be the last time the Loxton Show saw me.

Then, in 2022, my friends in the Karoo invited me back...

THE PANDEMIC interrupted the show in 2020 and 2021, so people were seriously excited to gather on the expanse of sand and devil's thorn that is Loxton's sports field once more. So excited, in fact, that Carnarvon, Fraserburg and Loxton even decided to play rugby again. Fortunately there were only 10 a side, because available men (and boots) had diminished. To strengthen their attack, each team had quietly imported players from universities and the Boland.

The weather in the Karoo was perfect when the matches started >

Horses for courses

On the far right is the 2022 Loxton July champion, Sam Devenish, on Arak. In the centre is Marthinus van den Heever, who took second place... while recording a video of the race with one hand. And in that very video it is clear that the horse and rider on the far left did not finish third. In fact, Beate van Wyk crossed the finish line in third place.

Shake, rattle and roll (above right)

Karoo riders know their way around horses. Keeping a tin on a reed at full speed may sound ridiculous, but you need to see this in action to know you'd never stand a chance.

Up and over! (right)

As part of the strongman competition, contenders had to make this tractor tyre, heavy metal rim and all, perform flick-flacks over a distance of 20 m and back.





Clouds down below... and way up above

The beautiful blue weather distracted the crowd and the rugby players alike. After the severe drought, people lose their minds when there is a whiff of rain in the air, Juan Louw says.

Tough as nails

After a rugby match in Loxton, it is said, you'll have dirt and gravel coming out of your ears and other openings for days.



on the Friday afternoon. Dark clouds gathered from all directions. Showers over the Nuweveld mountains, in the direction of Beaufort, blew a southerly wind over us. It resulted in thick balls of dust, but also kept everything wonderfully cool. The farmers occasionally turned their eyes to the weather, and the ball was kicked frequently. Tackles and loose scrums obscured the players behind red-brown curtains for a while. Fraserburg's impact players devastated Carnarvon.

"We aren't getting a break, because some of our guys aren't here," Juan Louw explained the huffing and puffing. Three men from Rawsonville were still on their way. Someone had also left behind the Carnarvon kitbag containing their team gear, which was why they resembled a ragbag – and Avbob had clearly sponsored Juan's old blue police jersey.

"If I don't take a smoke break now, I'm going to die," announced Daniël Vermeulen.

Ja, ja, it's halftime, confirmed match referee Marius Esterhuisen before fetching himself a cold beer. The bottles of water for the players were as hot as the back of a bakkie standing in the sun, because that's exactly where they had been forgotten. At least they came in handy for rinsing the dirt from the players' eyes, ears and mouths.

The situation didn't improve for Carnarvon in the second half. But later, against Loxton, they had the Boland "bomb squad" with them, and it was indeed Roy Brink who broke free at one point and headed straight for the try line. The clouds of dust that rose behind him were set alight by the late-afternoon sun, suspended for a moment above the ground like braai smoke. Yet it was the Loxton side that just managed >



Another one bites the dust

Fraserburg on their way to the try line. So *this* is what it looks like when you make someone eat dirt.





Shuffle, dance and jump

I have to say, it didn't matter what the DJ played that night – the people danced like there was no tomorrow. Right after this *langarm* hit, everybody jumped around to "Wit skoene" by Loufi and Jayms.



PHOTO ESSAY

to win, and next had to face Fraserburg in the final. Home ground advantage doesn't mean much here in the Karoo, because everyone has to do their best to side-step the devil's thorn. Fraserburg gave it their all and were crowned the champions of the show.

THE SHOW PROGRAMME for Saturday was packed with activities, and the egg-throwing, sack-racing, and tug-of-war kicked off early. To one side, sheep were being judged, and also braaied...

Meanwhile the ewes of Sakrivierpoort stepped up for the tug-of-war contest. These seven ladies were here to win, and that's exactly what they did. The microphone was practically attached to Carlo Nolte's hand, and he made sure to cover everything in his commentary.

"Ladies and gentlemen, things

are on fire over at the merino show and the competition for the best long-haired rams is so tough that the judges are considering only awarding first places. Yes indeed, this is what it looks like when the Karoo veld is beautiful and green for a change. So don't miss the braaivleis. It tastes exactly as it should, and not like a feeding trough. Right, it's time for the guys to show us what they're made of in the strongman competition!"

Muscles bulged and backs creaked considerably as a variety of uncomfortably heavy objects were picked up and moved around. The 400m relay was run with a 20-litre can of water in each hand. Then the guys had to offload a wagonload of maize bags, and then reload them all again. Completely unnecessary on such a hot day. But it's great fun if you're watching from a patch of shade on the pavilion. >

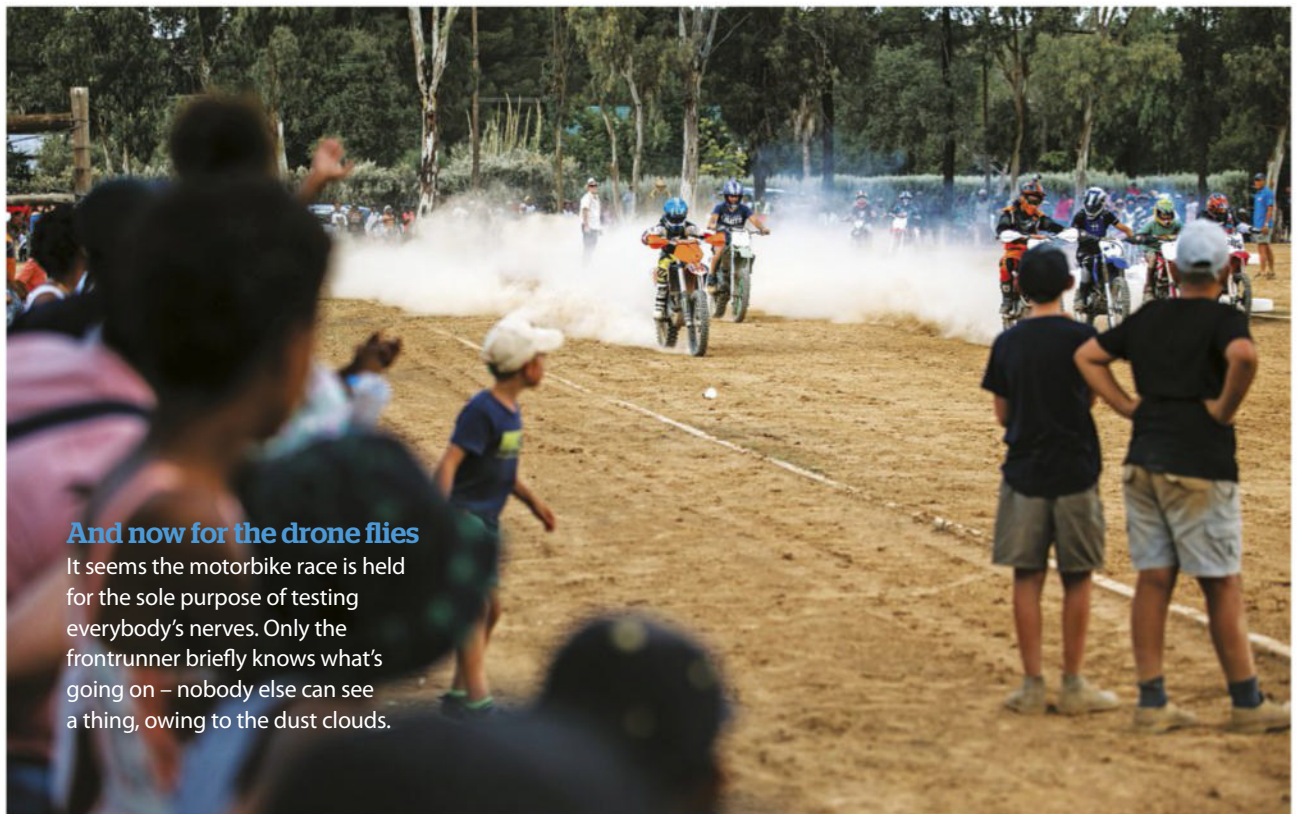
Not giving an inch! (right)

Sakrivierpoort's tug-of-war "ewes" show what they're made of as Christo Soltz and Marthinus van den Heever spur them on.

The bag of tricks

They may be able to lift heavy bags of maize, but how do they fare in a sack race? The strongmen had to prove their agility too – much to the crowd's amusement.





And now for the drone flies

It seems the motorbike race is held for the sole purpose of testing everybody's nerves. Only the frontrunner briefly knows what's going on – nobody else can see a thing, owing to the dust clouds.



Three-legged legends

The Van der Westhuizen brothers never slow down: not on their horses, not on their bikes and not when their legs are bound together.

Show business

Just because this is a small show, it doesn't mean there aren't huge challenges, say Lukie and Anine Steenkamp, who serve on the show committee. The storm on the Saturday evening meant that large amounts of alcohol were lost. And how do you suppose steak is braaied in the pouring rain? With iron will and patience.





All this simply kept everyone busy until the horses and riders arrived. Because they were the real reason why everyone was here.

Evidently the locals know how to ride a horse. The two Van der Westhuizen brothers, Danté and Alexander, were wilder than their spirited Arabian horses and tested the spectators' nerves. Carlo continued to broadcast it all.

"Now, people, it's time for the big event: the annual Loxton July."

After two rounds, whoever was first to barrel past the pavilion was the winner, and for the next year, horse and rider would have bragging rights. But first, spectators had an opportunity to bid on their favourites. Then the participants lined up. The 10 horses thundered around the first bend. On the pavilion it sounded like the Rugby World Cup.

Marthinus van den Heever simply sat on his shiny chestnut horse

and recorded all the action on his cellphone. While he was out in front. That is why, at the end of the video, you see Sam Devenish and Arak's black mane shoot past as they won the Loxton July.

THERE WAS TIME to rinse off the dust, and when everyone arrived at the shearing shed at Jakhalsdams, a lovely rain shower ensured that the Karoo, too, was cooled down and washed clean. Don't assume people were tired after all the heat and activity. No, not at all, for there was much merriment and dancing until deep into the night. Luckily I didn't need to impress anyone, because my ballerina was waiting in Bloemfontein. Maybe sunstroke was to blame, but I had already promised to return this year. I'd even play rugby... 

The Loxton Show will be held on 8 and 9 December 2023.  Loxton Skou

Hop to it

When last, if ever, did you take part in a sack race? Come on, visit the Loxton show and live a little.

PETS

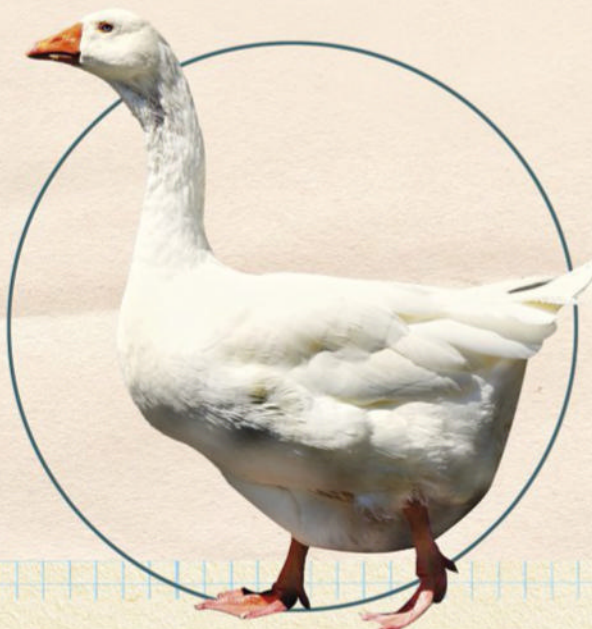




The rise of the fur baby

The relationship between human and domesticated animal dates back thousands of years but has changed quite profoundly over the past 50 years in particular. **Annelise Erasmus** wonders how and why the focus shifted from owning pets to parenting them.

ILLUSTRATIONS SEAN ROBERTSON



When I was in primary school, my father brought home a puppy – my first pet – from a business

trip. When he got home after many hours on the road, the puppy was missing. We finally found him in a small recess behind the dashboard. He was tiny, with long, soft black fur and huge, terrified eyes, so we gave him a big name: Nebuchadnezzar. Nebie.

THAT FIRST NIGHT, Nebuchadnezzar was allowed to sleep on my bed, since he was my puppy and he looked so scared and I begged. But my parents were making an exception, and I knew it. The following night he would sleep in his basket in the scullery, and when he got older, he would sleep outside. That's just how it was, and that was barely 40 years ago: A pet was still an animal – and animals were treated differently to how we treated people.

How has the emphasis shifted from domestic animal to pampered pet in the years since?

RESEARCHERS ARE NOT ALL in agreement on when and how dogs became domesticated. Some claim it happened 10000–14000 years ago; others believe it was at least 30000 years ago. Something else they can't agree on is whether it happened in Europe, the Middle East or Asia. Some researchers believe hunter-gatherers actively tamed wolves and bred them; others believe wolves domesticated themselves by scavenging hunters' waste and hanging around campfires, thus becoming more domesticated with each generation.

There is consensus, however, that the wolf is the ancestor of every dog on earth today. One of the most common explanations for how animals became part of people's lives is that, more than 15000 years

ago, animals were initially in a labour relationship with humans. Among other things, animals protected humans, helped hunters to track prey, and served as a means of transport and a food source; and cats hunted the rats and mice that were attracted by the humans' food and waste.

There have been a few discoveries showing that even then some of these animals were considered companions and not just workers. A grave from the Palaeolithic period was discovered in Israel in which a human was buried with a dog or wolf, with one hand arranged to rest on the animal's shoulder, as if to emphasise the bond between them.

Until the late-18th century, pets were not at all common among the middle classes. Today, a dog can be anything from a companion or a "child" to a status symbol, and offer its owner love, support and/or protection.

Over the past century, and more so in the past 50 years, our thinking about animals – pets in particular – has changed profoundly. In the span of half a human life, the general view of dogs and cats especially have changed from "animals should remain outside" to "it's my fur baby and he sleeps in my bed". There are various reasons for this change.

In First World countries, in particular, very few people now-



adays live on farms where animals form an integral part of their daily existence. The majority of children don't automatically associate food like milk and cheese with cows, or eggs with chickens.

When a child grows up on a farm, he or she learns about life and death and everything in between, from their interaction with animals. Cats eat mice. Dogs are bitten by snakes. Today there are campaigns to encourage cat owners to keep their pets indoors to prevent them from catching birds. This separation of the animal from its instincts helps to shape the idea that it is more similar to the human members of a family than to the animals of the veld.

One time, after a weekend away, we couldn't find Luna, our half-Siamese cat that had been seduced by Ed, our neighbour's cat, a couple of months before. One of the children heard meowing outside the bathroom window. After a successful treasure hunt following the sound of mewling, we carried six newborn kittens inside, the proud mother following.

THERE ARE MORE direct reasons for people's changing views on pets. As the idea of equal rights, opportunities and respect for all gradually took hold in the modern world, academics began to consider the rights of animals too. An example is Australian philosopher Peter Singer, whose book *Animal*

Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals, published in 1975, had a significant influence on animal rights movements.

Singer argued that animals too should have the right to be free from pain and suffering. His ideas began to seep into the social consciousness and change the way people saw animals. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded as long ago as 1866; today there are more than 5 000 animal rights groups in the US.

There is also a new consciousness of nature, and humans' place in it. Many no longer regard the human as the crown of creation, let alone in control of it. We've messed up way too much by poisoning large parts of creation and putting humanity's future in jeopardy. And if you no longer believe humans have dominion over "every living thing that moves on the earth", it's no surprise when you start to see animals as having equal rights. >

"Very few people live on farms where animals form an integral part of their daily existence. The majority of children don't automatically associate food like milk and cheese with cows..."



Traditional roles and customs have also changed significantly over the past few decades. Fewer people get married; fewer couples have children; more people decide to remain single. Many countries have negative population growth. The climate crisis, wars, uncertainty about the future, weak economies, expensive housing and high levels of unemployment are some of the reasons that have brought about this change.

Women also have more freedom to choose self-fulfilment through work over family obligations. Non-traditional variations of being together and being alone lead to new definitions of families and parenthood. Many of these focus on pets. In a world where you are free to choose anything, more and more

people choose a life with an animal companion – some even talk about interspecies families.

Allanon was the first puppy my husband and I got together. He loved socks folded into balls. On laundry day he would steal a pair from the bed, make sure we saw it in his mouth and then dart out the door with one of us chasing him. When we'd finally get hold of his excited little body and wrestle the socks out of his mouth, they would usually need to be washed again.

YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL someone with a pet about the benefits of sharing your life with an animal. Research has shown that it lowers your blood pressure, reduces stress and increases the oxytocin levels in your blood. Pets help people cope

with depression and dementia, and of course a four-legged companion would be a tonic against loneliness. Isolation, and the weakening of family ties have become common problems. Pets provide love and a sense of purpose.

Humans have a biological need to take care of someone or something. In a world where fewer people choose to have children, that need now finds expression in the relationship with a pet. The emotional bond that parents have with their children is initially formed because parents have to care for and protect their children. The same bond forms when a pet needs to be cared for and protected. Some people, "pet parents" in particular, use baby talk with their pets.

So it doesn't come as a surprise, these days, that many people think of their pets as their children. On the one hand, there may be a lack of words to describe the relationship between human and pet. The familiar words with almost the right meaning might just have been easier to use. >

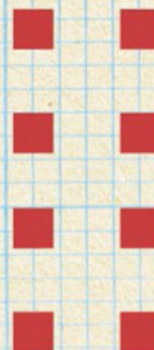
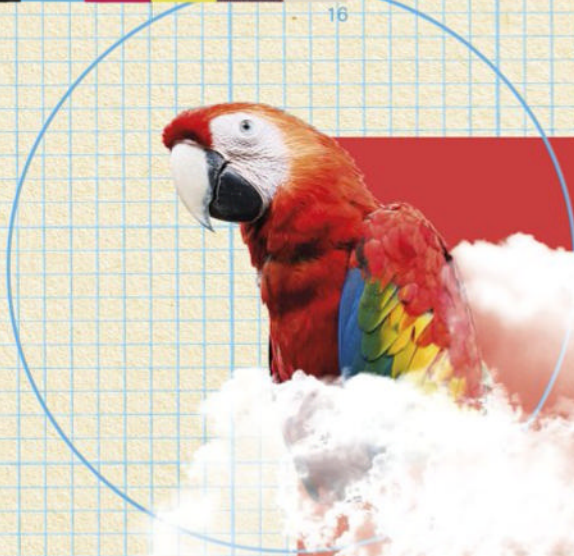
"The emotional bond that parents have with their children is formed because parents have to care for and protect their children. The same bond forms when a pet needs to be cared for and protected."





31

16



But there are also people for whom this is true in every sense. It is clear from social media posts that for many people the death of a beloved pet is similar to the death of a child. Studies have shown it is often people who don't have children who think of their pets this way. They tend to see their pets as individuals. Animals become substitutes for children, because they are less expensive to raise and easy to find. If you are not ready to live with someone, you can live with a pet – less is expected from you in the relationship, and a dog's love is unconditional.

One study also found that people who first have pets and then have children change their perception of their pets. They realise, for example, that there's a huge difference between the death of an animal and that of a child. After all, you don't buy another child later to replace

the one you lost. Parents often look to pets for companionship again once their children have moved out of the home.

As I'm writing this, Shadow is lying in a sunny spot at my feet. Her beauty gives me as much pleasure as her soft fur and feline personality do. On cold evenings, she lies on my husband's stomach while he watches TV. Like a typical cat, she rules the household, and we open doors for her numerous times a day through which she doesn't want to enter, and give her food only for her to decide that she didn't really want it immediately.

CAN THE "MODERN" VIEW of pets and our relationships with them be unhealthy? In previous centuries, the Chinese emperors' dogs were nursed by women and served by slaves. Even in today's animal-positive world, that sounds a bit

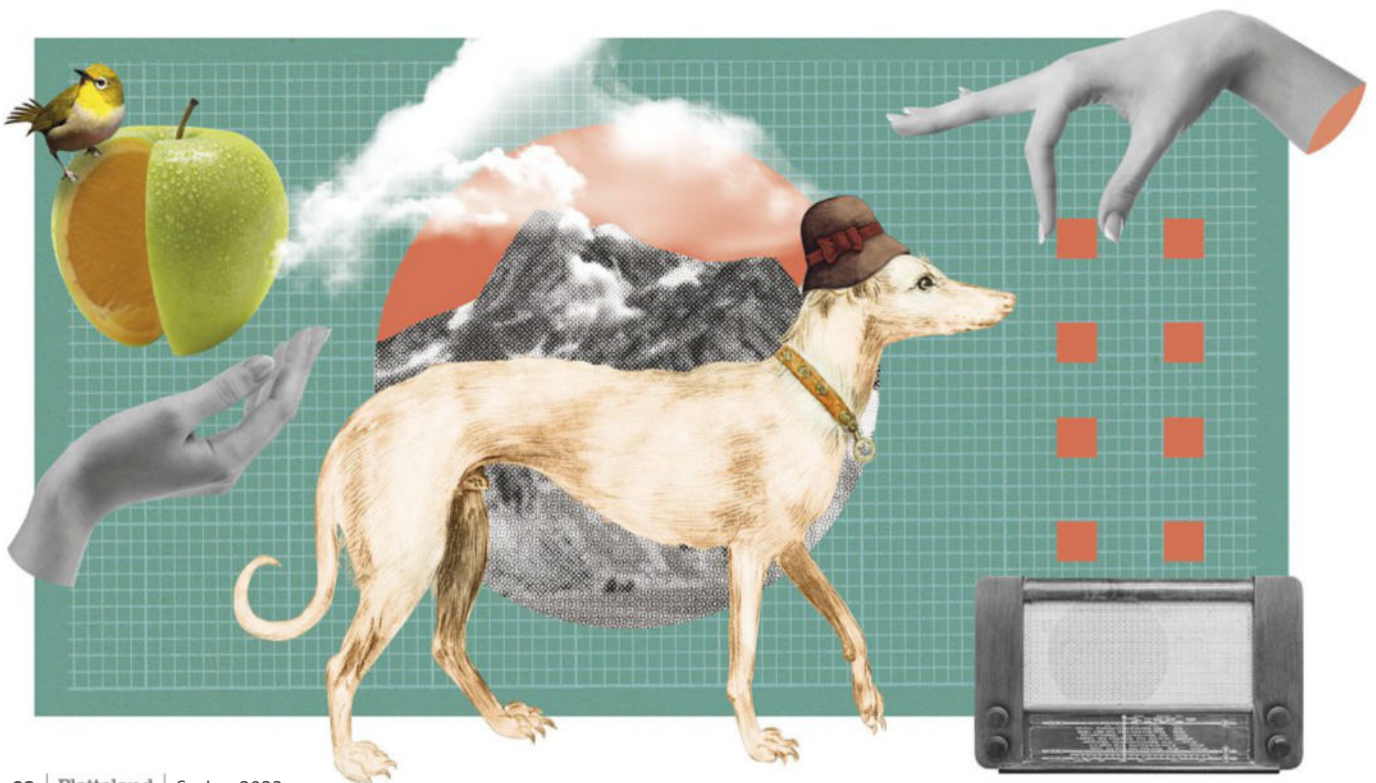
far-fetched. Yet people buy their animals Valentine's Day cards, and dogs and cats are pushed around in strollers. It's always a question of balance, isn't it?

A few years ago, two reports appeared side by side on the front page of an Afrikaans newspaper: the one was about a dog that was horribly mistreated by its owner, and the other about a woman who was raped in broad daylight right next to the N1 highway. Almost no one responded to the report about the woman, but the outrage about the dog had not subsided a month later. In the US, when a suspect shot and killed a police dog, the police returned fire and shot the fleeing man 10 times in the back. Only the suspect's family and a few friends cared about the man who'd been killed, whereas thousands attended the dog's funeral. In South Africa, people are vilified if they dare look for adoptive parents for their pets on neighbourhood WhatsApp groups when they decide to emigrate.

People like to quote Mahatma Gandhi in such cases:

"The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the

"In South Africa, people are vilified if they dare look for adoptive parents for their pets on neighbourhood WhatsApp groups when they decide to emigrate."





that our empathy is not specific to the species but to the helplessness and defencelessness of the victim. It explains how the response to the newspaper report about the mistreated dog and to other animals being hurt comes from the same place as when we react to a child being hurt: we impulsively want to take care of them and help them because they cannot help themselves.

There is also a phenomenon called the collapse of compassion. This happens when one's compassion and efforts to help decrease as the number of things in need increases. The more tragedy we see, the less we care. This is also possibly why people sometimes focus on a single case almost hysterically while ignoring countless other cases of suffering.

In line with the fundamental principles that liberal modern society strives for, anything is acceptable as long as it doesn't hurt others or take away their freedom to be who and how they want to be. Psychologists define something as unhealthy if it causes discomfort and suffering in your own life. From another point of view, the new kinds of relationships we have with our pets are positive and beautiful. It indicates newfound respect for everything in creation.

way its animals are treated." The fact that he said this while abusing his own wife, to name just one of his flaws, is of course not important to some people. Some probably believe animals are not only equal to humans but perhaps superior.

There are several possible reasons for these skewed reactions from animal lovers, and it does not necessarily indicate an imbalance in their relationship with animals. Empathy refers to the human ability to understand the emotions of others and be able to imagine oneself in someone else's shoes. Because we are constantly exposed to violence, murder and

suffering in the media, we are systematically desensitised to the suffering of others. Jack Levin, a US sociologist and criminologist, asked participants in a study to respond to a (made-up) story. It was about a victim who was assaulted with a baseball bat and left unconscious. The identity of the victim was changed in telling it to different participants: it was a one-year-old baby, an adult, a puppy and a mature dog. While the participants showed the same level of empathy towards the baby, the puppy and the mature dog, they showed less empathy if the victim was an adult. The researchers deduced from this

Oliekol, my ginger kitten, was still tiny when he went missing. I used to think of him sometimes as I watched my children playing with their first kitten. Unlike when I was little, the children's kitten was allowed to sleep on their beds. Before I go to sleep in the evenings, I go outside to pick up Shadow from the chair where she's pretending not to hear me so I can put her down on my own bed, where she won't be cold.

IT'S A GOOD THING that humanity is changing – for humans *and* for animals. Now we just need to learn to have the same kind of empathy with people. 🐾



Let's go to the garden!

Spring is here – and with it, a tangible fresh energy in humans, animals and the veld. Stroll through the lavender fields at Canettevallei farm, learn the names of the birds in your garden, celebrate Garden Day and make bookmarks decorated with spring flowers.

BY MAJA PALM

Frolic in fields of purple...

For six months of the year, 3 ha of the farm Canettevallei outside Stellenbosch are covered in waves of French lavender.

“Until the end of September, visitors can come walk through our lavender fields and pick their own bunches of flowers,” says co-owner Ingrid de Waal. She has farmed with lavender for 18 years, but Canettevallei is in fact a historic wine farm that has been in existence since the 18th century.

“After an inspiring tour through France, I negotiated with my husband, Daniël, to remove 3 ha of grapevines so that I could plant the oil variety of lavender, *Lavandin abrialis*, and the French *Lavendula dentata*,” says Ingrid.

Although she has developed many lavender products over the years, the most important one remains the Canettevallei essential oils. “We distill these ourselves and they are 100% pure.”

When you pick flowers, Ingrid says, you are engaging all your senses. “You see and smell the blooms; you feel their texture; you listen to the buzzing of thousands of bees, to the birds and the wind. It's a truly grounding activity.

“Many people come here to take photos, which is also lovely. But as they spend an hour walking among the lavender and picking flowers, you can clearly see how their mood is lifted.”



The 3 ha of lavender planted by Ingrid de Waal (left) on the wine farm Canettevallei immediately brings to mind the French countryside.

After taking a relaxing stroll, feel free to enjoy the Canettevallei craft and heritage wines – there is a range of interesting and unusual cultivars such as Petit Verdot, Malbec, Sangiovese and Semillon. And when you leave, you will not only take a bunch of flowers away with you, but will also have a smile on your face.

How does it work? Visitors are each given a pair of scissors and a plastic ring that serves as a measuring tool. Ingrid and her assistants will

share more information about the lavender and show you the picking area. Then you are free to lose yourself among the flowers for as long as it takes to pick enough stems to fill your picking ring.

Hours Mondays to Saturdays, 10:00-17:00 (closed on Sundays and public holidays)

Cost R50 a bunch

Contact canettevalleilavender.co.za

[@canettevallei](https://www.instagram.com/canettevallei) [Canettevallei](https://www.facebook.com/Canettevallei)
Lavender ☎ 072 730 9811



Stock up at the farm shop

Canettevallei has an online store, but visitors to the farm are able to buy products directly from Laventelhaan, the shop on the premises. These are some of our favourites.

Luxury soaps

"I have been a passionate soap maker for the past eight years," says Ingrid. "We produce more than 50 natural soaps, some of which are made with unusual ingredients to customise a product for a particular goal or client." The enchanting Flower Blocks, decorated with dried flowers from the garden, weigh 300 g and are made in the style of the French Savon de Marseille. Then there are even soaps that are each packaged with a crystal.

Lavender dream pillows

Made from pretty vintage fabric, these fragrant bags are filled with dried lavender buds. Ingrid guarantees that the scent will last five years or longer.

Lavender honey

Since the lavender operation was established on the farm, the bird and insect populations have increased noticeably. "The lavender attracts thousands of bees, so the logical next step was to establish hives," says Ingrid.

The result is a rare type of honey, because lavender doesn't contain much nectar. That's why the subtly flavoured honey is available only in limited quantities. >



Call your garden birds by name

Do you notice the same garden birds in your back yard every day, but only know the sparrows, weavers and swallows? Illustrator Jeanne Hugo van der Merwe, owner of Smartypants Posters, has created a practical (and attractive!) way to make you feel like a bird expert in no time.

"During the Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, our family spent most of our time in the garden," says Jeanne. "We would lie on our backs and stare up at the expanse of branches and sky above us. To my surprise, I didn't know the names of most of the birds we saw. I wondered how I would teach my sons about our feathered friends if I couldn't even identify them myself."

Jeanne is an illustrator and, inspired by the vintage botanical posters of days gone by, she decided to create a watercolour sketch of each bird that visits their garden. Soon she had drawn more than 20 species!

She wants her posters to encourage young and old to spend time outdoors and experience how wonderful it is to know the names of the birds we see in our gardens every day, and to appreciate nature.

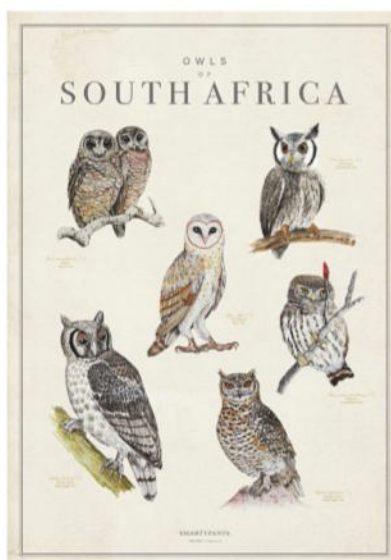
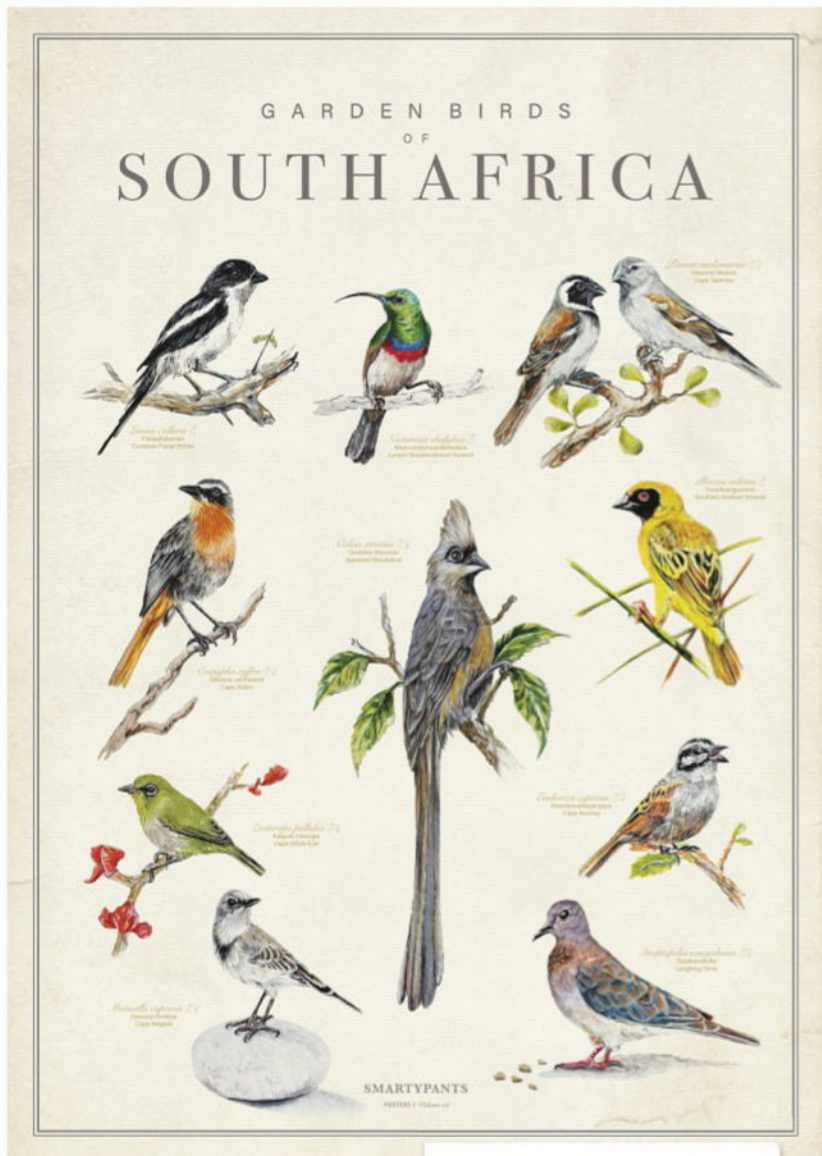
"I have now drawn 40 South African garden birds and 12 owls. Do I need to say that I'm now a fully-fledged birdwatching addict? And I'm just as crazy about the birding community."

These unique works of art make lovely gifts – they are educational, beautiful and affordable.

Jeanne is currently working on a series featuring sea birds, birds of prey, ducks, and strange and enchanting birds of South Africa.

Cost From R480 for two A2 posters (200gsm paper); R435 for a handmade wooden poster hanger

Contact @studio_coocoo
smartypantsposters.com (Scroll to the bottom of the site to download a free recipe card for garden-bird food.)



Illustrator Jeanne Hugo van der Merwe knew nothing about birds, but then she started painting them... Today she is a dedicated "bird-watching addict".

Host a garden party on Garden Day!

Stop digging and hoeing, and start planning and planting: Sunday 15 October 2023 is Garden Day, and everyone is invited to South Africa's biggest garden party – in your own garden.

Even if you have only one plant, you're officially a gardener, and that's why anyone can celebrate Garden Day – in the garden, on your stoep, in your back yard or in your living room, surrounded by your favourite houseplants.

Organise a lazy lunch, a festive picnic, a family braai or a cocktail do, or have tea with your best friend. It doesn't have to be lavish... unless you want it to be! The idea is that you celebrate the day exactly as you please. But do wear a flower crown – the official symbol of Garden Day.

Looking for inspiration? Visit gardenday.co.za. Under "Toolkit" you will find instructions for making a flower crown as well as garden-themed recipes, downloadable invitations and ideas for getting the young ones involved.

Stay informed For news and inspiration, find **@GardenDaySA** on all social media platforms and share your Garden Day moments by using the hashtag **#GardenDaySA**. >



Reward yourself for all your hard work by setting a table and enjoying your garden with friends and family. This is why we toil in the soil, after all!



DIY

Floral bookmarks for spring

Is there anything better than enjoying a beautiful spring day under a blossom-covered tree and reading a good book? Here's how to make your own bookmarks, which can also be used as gift tags.



YOU NEED

- the Pinterest app
- cardboard (A4)
- punch
- ribbon

THIS IS HOW

Open Pinterest and type “Free spring botanical printables” in the search bar. There will be several beautiful options from which to choose. We downloaded Karen Burnett’s “Vintage Spring Botanicals”.

Print the design of your choice on cardboard. Cut out the bookmarks, punch a hole in each one and thread a length of ribbon through it. 

This super-effective six-week meal plan will put a stop to your sugar addiction and help you lose weight.

LOSE THE SUGAR

From our meal plan



- Are you struggling to beat the sugar habit?
- Do you feel tired and lack energy and focus?
- Do you suffer from acid reflux, digestive problems or even anxiety?
- Do you suffer from joint pain and inflammation?
- Have you been gaining weight?

These could all be symptoms of a diet high in sugars and processed carbohydrates (starches). The good news is that you can change this within six weeks – and benefit from increased energy and improved health.

EACH WEEK YOU'LL GET:

A summary of what you can expect in the week ahead; a meal plan; a shopping list; and a list of foods you may eat and foods you should avoid.

- You will start to feel better after **only one week on the meal plan**.
- You will have **more energy and mental clarity**.
- You're going to feel and look so much better that you will never want to go back to your old diet again!

Only R499

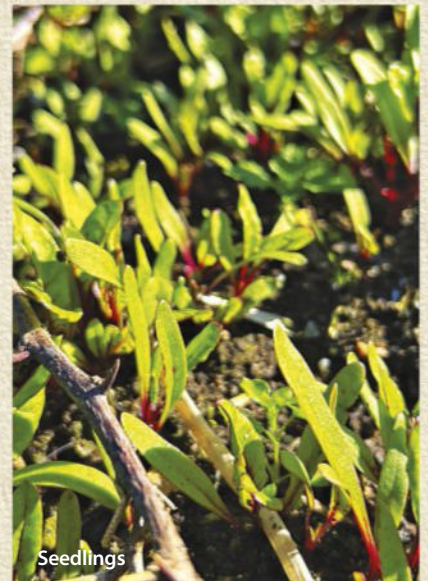
Sign up now!

losethesugar.co.za

FOOD GARDEN



Feverfew



Seedlings

Home ground advantage

All year round, the garden at the Native Roots Shelter for homeless people in Plettenberg Bay is overflowing with nutritious vegetables, herbs, fruit, grains and flowers that are used as food and for medicinal purposes. The driving force behind it credits the legendary Margaret Roberts as her inspiration.

TEXT GAYE BOSHOFF PHOTOS VANESSA BREWER AND GAYE BOSHOFF



Pink Yarrow



Calendula



Mary-Anne's the happiest in her garden with 3-year old Psyche who is also known to harvest carrots and sweet potatoes for herself and the shelter's other fur companion, Eros. The winter pavement garden is full of cosmos, poppies, calendula, yarrow, comfrey, feverfew, turmeric, stinging nettle and organic vegetables.



Mary-Anne Mngomezulu (née Cunningham) radiates the kindness and compassion one would expect of an angel. Together with the homeless people at the drug- and alcohol-free shelter on the corner of Marine Way and Sea Witch Avenue in Plettenberg Bay, she has curated a magnificent food and medicinal permaculture garden using no pesticides whatsoever.

The entire garden is testimony to what the homeless community is capable of achieving, and is always overflowing with vegetables, various herbs, fruit trees, grains and flowers. Here people work joyfully alongside

Mary-Anne – weeding, building Hügeltkultur compost heaps, creating new beds, sowing, planting and cooking up the harvests.

The shelter receives very few monetary contributions. Instead, Mary-Anne has created an exchange of energy further to benefit the community, using the shelter's plants, as well as donations from strangers. This, she believes, has kept their operation running.

The garden's pathways are lined with a diverse range of potted plants – if you decide to donate something, you may help yourself to any of the plants without any limitations. The foyer is brimming with donations – boxes filled with all sorts, both old and new. All the

donated clothing is washed, sorted and packed according to size, ready for distribution at very short notice. The water that is used to wash all the clothing is led straight to the garden and the compost heaps.

The municipality allows them to use the building and supplies them with water and electricity. In exchange, the shelter acts as the “disaster response” for the town, helping to distribute the donations received from the kind people of Plettenberg Bay to the poor, those who have lost their homes due to fires, or simply anyone in need.

“The return is much more than money. You must look beyond money,” Mary-Anne says. “Look at the energy of people, their goodwill,

LEFT Oom Chicco, an amputee, spends at least 7 hours a day weeding, mixing soil for potting and making cuttings. Oom Alfred has been assisting and learning from him. **CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT** A wide variety of fruit trees have been donated and planted like this guava; Plump winter healthy cabbages nearly ready to harvest; Some of the grey water is lead to the banana tree; The garden's full of cosmos flowers attracting the bees – this one laden with pollen.



kindness, generosity, integrity and compassion.”

Good nutrition

Mary-Anne's great-great-grandfather came from Scotland and settled down with a Khoi woman in Thornham, a little hamlet east of the Storms River bridge, set in the heart of the forests and foothills of the majestic Tsitsikamma mountains.

Mary-Anne was born in Port Elizabeth in 1970. After her father lost his job when his company closed down due to the sanctions imposed on South Africa, the family relocated to Coldstream, where they lived in the shadow of the

indigenous Tsitsikamma forests. Moving from a beautifully furnished flat to a shack was too much for Mary-Anne's mother, who became an alcoholic and died before Mary-Anne's younger brother reached the age of 8. He was born with fetal alcohol syndrome and became malnourished because he was being fed the wrong food. For this reason, nutrition is very important to Mary-Anne today.

Her grandfather was a subsistence farmer in Tsitsikamma. He was a quiet man, but loved to teach her things. He had a large piece of land, including an apple orchard, along with all kinds of fruit trees ranging from pears and lemons to guavas and figs. He owned a substantial

barn where he kept his tractor and tools, and adjacent to it was his magnificent vegetable garden. He inspired her in countless ways. He taught her that snakes are part of the ecosystem and should be respected and not just killed.

“Having an alcoholic as a parent gives you a certain set of skills and traits,” Mary-Anne says.

Cor van Deventer, owner of the general dealer in Storms River, saw something spectacular in young Mary-Anne. She worked for him while he taught her and nurtured her as a leader. She then spread her wings, moving to KwaZulu-Natal to work at a car and truck repair centre. From there, she gained an interest in tourism. >

FOOD GARDEN

“They began building and raising beds for their very own vegetable and herb garden. Donations of plants and seed flooded in, and the homeless shelter was finally established..”



TOP RIGHT One of Mary-Anne's favorite things to get dropped off is dung. It's the beginning of a new compost bed.
ABOVE RIGHT A sunflower brightens up the shelter's green winter garden. **RIGHT** A leaf or 2 in a salad of Red Foxtail amaranth, is good for blood building.



She trained as a field guide accredited by the Field Guide Association of South Africa and as a tourism trainer and assessor, and attended the Travel Indaba show numerous times. She then studied project management courses through the University of Cape Town before securing a position with the Eden District Municipality, moving to Plettenberg Bay and working for both the mayor's office there and in Oudtshoorn.

Food and medicine

Mary-Anne's passion for growing food and medicine snowballed in 2011 at OR Tambo Airport. On a visit to Johannesburg, she found herself browsing in a bookstore, waiting for her flight, when she came across *My 100 Favorite Herbs* by Margaret Roberts. She became completely engrossed and tragically left the book behind when she had to run to board her nearly forgotten plane.

Getting back home, she discovered that the book was nowhere to be found in the Garden Route, only in

Cape Town. She finally managed to buy it during a specially arranged trip with a friend. She slept for months with her new book safely on her bedside table.

Multiple mayors from various districts were now head-hunting her, and she declined their offers, asking God for guidance. Her passion was development, and growing food and medicine. In 2019, a desirable opportunity finally sprouted: A friend invited her to participate in farming medicinal plants in Richmond,



Sitting under the Shelter's Yellowwood trees, Mary-Anne's fueled by a good cup of coffee whilst chewing on nasturtium leaves, chive and onion tops, and parsley

KwaZulu-Natal. She accepted and planned to leave shortly... but soon everything changed.

"God has a sense of humour and tested me," she says.

Days before her intended departure, Mary-Anne and fellow board members of Native Roots (a non-profit organisation that provides a drug- and alcohol-free safe space for homeless and street people) initiated a short-term shelter in Plettenberg Bay's Piesang Valley Community Hall. The municipality then moved them to

the Old Court Goods Station, with the aim of having them clean up the empty building and garden.

Three days after they moved onto the property, a major pipe burst. The municipality came to fix it, sending a digger-loader that removed the tough grass from the severely compacted soil. This literally was also the start of the Native Roots garden.

Mary-Anne realised they would need both good soil and compost to grow their own food as a sustainable shelter. The task was proving >





ABOVE Beautiful white lavender thickets are scattered around the garden. **RIGHT** Oom Pete and Oom Wayne used this winter to pot and propagate thousands of plants. **OPPOSITE** Oom Fielies and Mary-Anne picking up rubbish whilst weeding the pavement garden. Oom Fielies has been at the shelter for over a year now. He's so diligent and loves marigolds.



difficult. So she changed her mind, deciding not to abandon them, and declined her friend's offer. They began building and raising beds for their very own vegetable and herb garden. Donations of plants and seed flooded in, and the homeless shelter was finally established.

Plant pharmacy

Over the years, Monday has become the designated "cooking" day at the shelter. Every dish made by the shelter family contains a cup of Mary-Anne's favourite: nutritious stinging nettle. Depending on the

season, borage and milk thistle leaves are also added. Borage is especially rich in potassium, magnesium and calcium – good for the bladder, kidney ailments, stimulating the adrenal glands, and helpful for menopausal changes. Milk thistle contains silymarin, which protects the liver. It helps especially when the liver is under stress from excessive painkillers or alcohol, incorrect eating, chemotherapy or infectious disease.

Onions and chives are another firm favourite, as they are beneficial for the chest and lungs. Tuberculosis is a massive problem among the

homeless and street people in Plettenberg Bay. There are also many people who have given up on illicit drugs and alcohol but are still smoking. Daily, they make immense salads, which always include baby spinach, nasturtium leaves (very good for sore throats and emphysema) and pretty flowers from the garden, such as nasturtium, borage and garlic. Edible flowers are an excellent source of nutrients, commonly packed with antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds. Anything with a medicinal value is incorporated into their diet.



A FUTURE DREAM for the shelter is to own a greenhouse. The local climate can bring harsh changes, giving rise to pests, and a greenhouse will allow them to grow more food throughout the year. Redesigning the garden to make it less labour-intensive, as well as recreating some of the beds to mimic the dry Karoo to farm medicinal plants like sceletium interplanted with lemon verbena, would also be economically uplifting to the shelter. (Both sceletium and lemon verbena are on the top 25 list identified by the Department of Environmental Affairs's National

Biodiversity Economy Strategy.

The process of extending the gardens to grow medicinal plants on the pavement along the whole of Marine Way towards the N2 has already begun. Hopefully this will also help to create a beautiful corridor for bees. In addition, youth can be trained to conduct guided walks to expose tourists to our indigenous medicinal plants. "This garden has really given me a different perspective on homelessness and homeless people," the angel says.. 

Contact  native1970@gmail.com
 082 887 4818

Stinging nettle

Malnutrition buster

Stinging nettle is a profound ancient body-building tonic herb, full of vitamins and minerals and particularly rich in vitamin C and iron, that has stood the test of time.

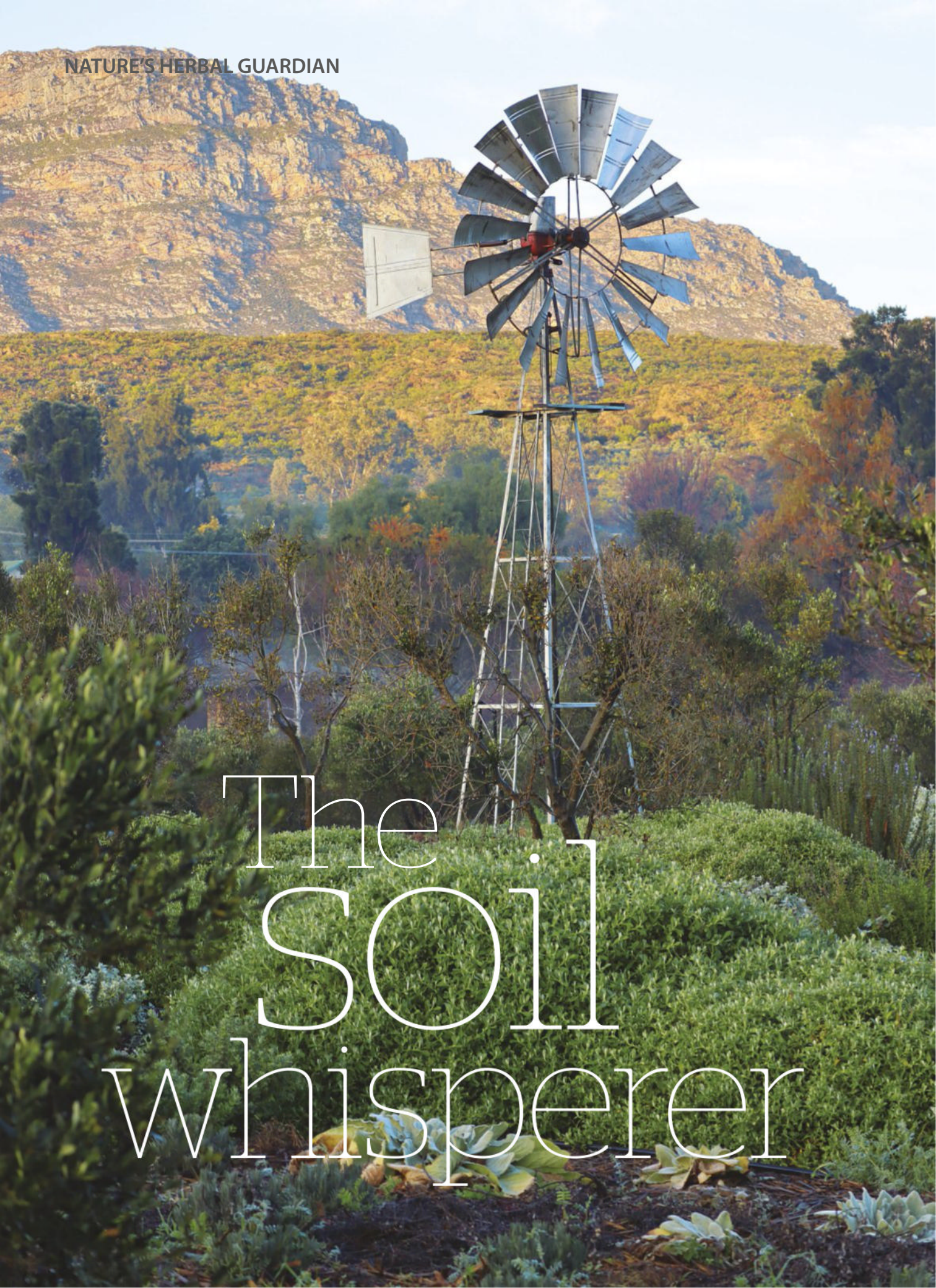
You can harvest the fresh leaves and nettle tops (make sure to wear gloves and a long-sleeved shirt) and cook as you would spinach. Adding it to soups and stews will provide you with energy, vitality and extra strength.

Eating the young nettle tops is said to be one of the best treatments for colds, flu and bronchitis. It both cleanses and detoxifies.

The plant is also most useful for the treatment of gout, arthritis, poor kidney function and fluid retention. Nettle increases urine flow and can dissolve blockages in the urethra. It is also anti-allergenic, and can be used to treat anaemia, improve breast-milk production and reduce prostate pain. Furthermore, nettle rids the body of acid build-up and, with its extraordinary mineral content, promotes general health. It is a simple yet profound remedy for reducing blood-sugar levels in all ages and building up the immune system.



NATURE'S HERBAL GUARDIAN



The Soil whisperer



At the urban farm Karoolkie in the heart of Barrydale, ecological restorer and farmer Yvette Anderson grows indigenous plants with medicinal properties. She uses them to heal both people and the soil, working by hand and in harmony with nature – each step taken with great care and attention to detail.

TEXT JOHAN VAN ZYL PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD



Yvette Anderson and her partner, metaverse specialist Dale Imerman, felt an instant connection with the Karoolkie cob-house estate on their first visit in 2021. The 6 ha smallholding in the centre of Barrydale belonged to Gerald and Carol Phillips.

“It could have been a picture straight out of Tuscany... The vineyard looked happy, but I could see the trees in the neglected olive grove were deeply unhappy,” Yvette recounts. “And what you see above ground usually reflects what is happening below it.”

Yvette, a landscape architect and ecological farmer, had spent the previous five years turning a ruined old golf course near Citrusdal into a thriving fynbos habitat with indigenous medicinal plants. She

uses these plants for her product range Yamù Botanicals, which includes tea blends, dried herbs, tinctures and incense bundles. She saw the olive grove in Barrydale as an opportunity for a new land restoration project and persuaded the owner to let her take care of it.

“Soil is a living entity. It should teem with microorganisms that play a decisive role in promoting plant growth and health. As an ecological farmer, you build healthy, fertile soil with organic matter and avoid anything synthetic that can damage these beneficial microbes. Healthy soil holds more water, reduces erosion and captures carbon,” she explains.

What they discovered shocked them to their core: Many trees had not been planted properly, and several had even been left inside their nursery bags, apparently because some people believe that

“an olive tree has to struggle and break through the plastic by itself, to become strong.”

The soil was riddled with weed seeds and dense clumps of couch grass – and essentially dead, owing to years of chemical fertiliser and pesticide use. “The soil literally started to spit out bits of plastic and rubbish,” Yvette says.

First, they removed each and every bit of plastic, rubbish, weeds and couch grass by hand before they began a process that Yvette calls exponential regeneration: The severely damaged soil is enriched only with layers of mulch (no fertilisers, pesticides, compost or chemical substances), and then a wide variety of indigenous plants are planted. Over time, they multiply and create diverse ecologies.

“The trees started to recover as soon as we switched to an organic system, but then the drought came >



LEFT Dale Imerman, Yvette Anderson, and their dog Basjan in the area where they propagate plants.

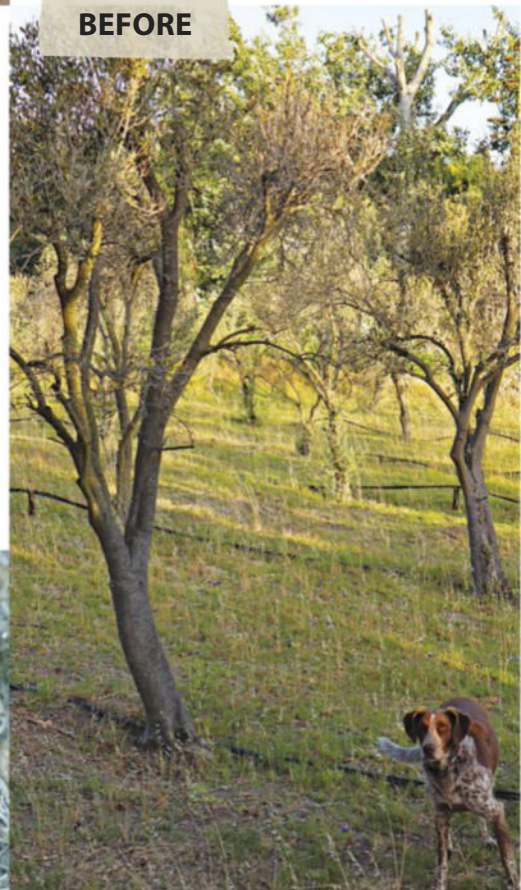
BELOW At Karoolkie, there is always tea from Yamù Botanicals to taste; Some of the plants with medicinal properties that Yvette and others grow, including *Verbascum thapsus*, known as mullein, and imphepho (*Helicrysum odoratissimum*); This is how the neglected olive grove looked before Yvette intervened.

OPPOSITE The house on Karoolkie where Yvette and Dale first lived, which will soon be guest accommodation and a small shop with a nursery and oil distillery.

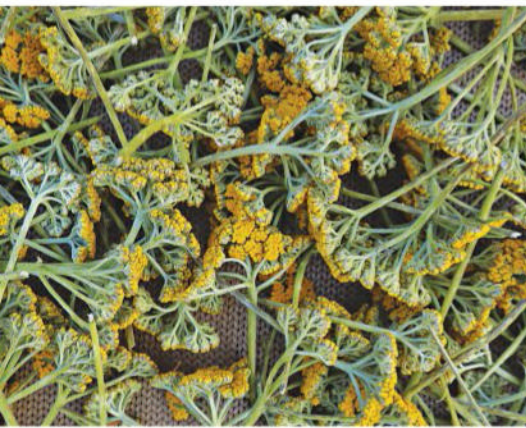
PREVIOUS SPREAD, RIGHT Yvette and Leah on the couch with Basjan watching at her feet.



BEFORE



RIGHT Between the rows of olive trees on Karoolkie, a mixture of indigenous plants with medicinal properties and others cultivated for their oil has been planted. This transformation followed a thorough cleaning of the area, where all rubbish, plastic, cultivated grass and weeds were removed from the ground. **BELOW** These imphepho flowers (*Helichrysum odoratissimum*) are harvested early in the morning and dried before being distilled for oil. **OPPOSITE** Harvested plant material is dried before distillation.



– and the insects! The trees had no immune system...”

The main principle of ecological farming is that Mother Nature knows best, so this farming method mimics natural ecosystems, creating a symbiotic relationship between the soil, plants, animals and humans.

Ecological farming is not only about farming, says Yvette – the focus is on building the soil and encouraging balance and diversity to establish a system where all forms of life can thrive. After all, each species has a role in the ecosystem. Roles can range from natural pest control and pollination services to the recycling of nutrients. This type of farming requires a holistic approach and an understanding of complex natural elements. What's more, you need to be patient and work in harmony with Mother

Nature's rhythms rather than against them.

The soil-and-plant pharmacy

The plants Yvette uses to restore the soil remain a continuous experiment, as the growing conditions vary constantly. Certain plants that thrived in Citrusdal just won't grow at all in Barrydale (and vice versa). Since she acquired an oil distiller, Yvette also grows many types of plants that are not necessarily indigenous but have significant market value as oil. Currently only 5% of the indigenous medicinal herbs in South Africa are cultivated – the rest are harvested in an unsustainable manner in nature by roughly 200 000 South Africans.

At the moment Yvette focuses on California white sage (*Salvia apiana*); imphepho, known as



kooigoed in Afrikaans (*Helichrysum odoratissimum*); mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*); and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) – but her arsenal also includes silver stoebe (*Seriphium plumosum*); rhinoceros bush (*Dicerotheramnus rhinocerotis*); kraalbos (*Galenia africana*); confetti bush or Cape May (*Coleonema album*); wild wormwood (*Artemisia afra*); wild rosemary (*Erioccephalus africana*); wild olive (*Olea africana*); wild dagga or lion's ear (*Leonotus leonurus*); David's root (*Cissampelos capensis*); Cape mistletoe (*Viscum capense*); cancer bush (*Lessertia frutescens*); buchu (*Agathosma betulina*); blue sage (*Salvia africana-caerulea*); sand olive (*Dodonaea viscosa* var. *angustifolia*); rooibos and green rooibos (*Aspalanthus linearis*); and good old rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) and lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*). >



Put ecology first in your garden

Yvette says it may be time-consuming, but it's easy to follow ecologically sensible principles in your own garden:

1 Know your soil. Have your soil tested – the type (clay, sand or loam), the pH level, as well as levels of other nutrients. You can then make the necessary adjustments over time with organic home-made compost, mulches or cover crops.

2 Remove everything toxic from the soil, including rubbish and plastic.

3 Get rid of aggressive invaders like couch grass (also known as *kweek*) or bamboo reed, but remember, it can take months – even years – to eradicate them completely. Persevere.

4 Diversity ensures balance. Plant a variety of plants that have adapted to the local climate and soil conditions, and are not as susceptible to diseases and pests. A variety of plants also provides a richer habitat for beneficial insects, birds and other wildlife. Keep your lawn as small as possible.

5 Don't simply remove and throw away things. "Just about everything can be recycled. Find new uses for old items rather than sending them to landfills. At Cederkloof, for example, we placed

the aggressive grass we removed onto the farm roads to reduce dust clouds; we remove the grass here, but must wait until it has completely withered before it's safe to use in compost or as a mulch," says Yvette.

6 Make compost from a good balance of green organic waste (such as vegetable and fruit peelings, grass and coffee grounds) and brown waste (including old branches, leaves and paper) to enrich your garden soil.

7 An organic mulch such as wood chips or compost is non-negotiable – it helps retain soil moisture, reduces weed growth and breaks down over time to enrich the soil with nutrients that promote healthy plant growth.

8 Don't till the soil and disturb the microbial life unless, you need to get rid of nasty weed banks.

9 Never try to take shortcuts with chemical pesticides or herbicides. In the long term it is better to control pests and weeds with beneficial insects like ladybirds and other predators such as spiders and birds, as well as crop rotation and companion planting.

10 Be water smart. Water deeper but less frequently to encourage the plants to form deeper root systems. Catch all possible rainwater.



ABOVE The dream team that does everything by hand. In the back row, from left, are Dale Imerman, Yvette Anderson, Henri Ruiter, Breyton Braaf (who has since resigned), Gerald Skippers, D'metrey Skippers, John Perkeur, Ethan Snyman, and Mark-Lee Meiring. In front, from left, are Jeffrey Perkeur, James Phillips, Engenol Koppies, and Darren Britz, and right at the front are Grace Wilson (retired), Melvaline Colette, Garnet Moyo, Cornice Hendricks, and Izak Marthinus.

From Kaapmuiden to California

Yvette has had to walk a long road to find meaning in her life. She grew up in Kaapmuiden in the Lowveld, surrounded by citrus, mango, lychee and papaya farms, and there was a vegetable garden from which they prepared meals. Her mother and grandmother were skilled gardeners. "I remember how my grandmother later developed dementia and no longer knew who I was, but if you visited her in her lovely large garden just outside Kaapmuiden, she would introduce you to every precious plant in the garden. Interestingly enough, she also treated many people's wounds but never used medicinal plants to do so."

At 10, Yvette and her sister moved to live with their father in the Kaokoveld, but after a landmine accident left him paraplegic, she completed high school in Durbanville in the Cape.

"You know how school worked back then: If you were good at something, like I was at maths and accounting, you were sort of pushed into a direction, and you zoomed in on that."

She completed a BCom and an honours degree in management accounting at Stellenbosch and went to America in 1995 to learn to ski (she also met a man and was married for eight years). Yvette lived in California for 15 years, first in Tahoe and later San Diego, and gained five years of experience in the corporate America working as an accountant at Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC).

"I had that typical 'glass corner office at 30' dream, and it was realised to some extent, but my life had no integrity. It was a sobering moment when I realised that nothing I was doing mattered at all."

She began to take all sorts of extra classes: jazz dance, tango

lessons, pottery, a basic degree in architecture. She desperately wanted to work for an ecological architect in California who specialised in indigenous landscape design, but he wasn't hiring. "Then I found out where he bought his plants and started volunteering there. From him, I learnt about plants and ecology, and ended up working for him for five years."

From the Cape to Citrusdal

In 2010, Yvette returned to South Africa, completed a master's degree in landscape architecture at the University of Cape Town, and then gained experience at the landscape architecture practice OvP Associates.

Yvette moved to Citrusdal in 2017 as one of the owners and the general manager of the Cedarkloof Botanical Retreat outside the town. It was a severely damaged piece of

land: Years of wheat farming had completely depleted the arable land, and on top of that, 100ha of topsoil had been removed to make way for a golf course. First the manicured green expanse of grass had to be removed – an epic, demanding and time-consuming task – and next they restored the fertility of the soil with indigenous herb plants and fynbos. It wasn't long before birds returned. At night, aardvarks, porcupines, honey badgers and leopards started to reappear...

"You and your body just suddenly feel more in harmony. We live in a world where Western medicine is considered the be-all and end-all, and people who use herbs are dismissed as not modern or sophisticated. We must guard our knowledge of our indigenous medicinal plants like gold – or like soil." 

Contact  yamubotanicals.com

 Yamu Botanicals

Meet Yvette in person

• 23–25 September in Montagu

Yvette will discuss medicinal herbs at the third Herb Fest presented at the Montagu Museum.

 montagumuseum.co.za/herb-festival-2023  Montagu Herb Festival  084 451 2942

• 6–8 October in Barrydale

Yvette will be one of the speakers at the Barrydale in Bloom garden festival. She'll talk about how she has used indigenous medicinal plants in various projects to heal the land – and people – in harmony with nature. She will also offer a guided tour of the Yamù medicinal garden at Karoolkie, which includes a demonstration of the distillation process of essential oils.

 barrydaleinbloom.com



LEFT In the summer, the herbs are harvested early in the morning and then laid out to dry.

ABOVE At Karoolkie, nothing goes to waste. Local artist Zane Heart is creatively repurposing discarded materials, using them to construct charming plant beds near the new tea garden and relaxation area that's currently being developed.

EMs: Organisms that breathe life into soil

Garden success starts beneath your feet in the intricate universe of your garden soil. One of the key players here is a unique group of microbes known as anaerobic effective microorganisms (EMs) that supercharge your soil, leading to healthier, stronger plants.

Anaerobic effective microorganisms are naturally occurring microbes that thrive in environments without oxygen. They typically consist of a blend of lactic acid bacteria, yeasts, photosynthetic bacteria and other beneficial microorganisms, each playing a unique role in creating a balanced, healthy soil ecosystem. These highly beneficial organisms work together to break down organic material in the soil into nutrient-rich humus that allows plants to thrive.

The fascinating thing about EMs is that they reproduce themselves. The microbes begin to multiply immediately when you spray them on the soil, forming a dense population that quickly overpowers pathogenic organisms. EMs help to manage the pH level, break down toxins and improve the soil's structure to create the optimal growth area for plant roots. They also make the soil more porous, so it can hold more moisture.

EMs work by fermenting organic matter in the soil. Through this process, they unlock nutrients that would otherwise be inaccessible to plants. The by-products of the fermentation process can also help protect the plant against diseases and send pests packing.

The Plettenberg Bay vegetable gardener, creator of the Moonbloom

plant calendar, and regular *Platteland* contributor Gaye Boshoff and her husband, Pieter, have been making their own EMs for a number of years and have just introduced 500ml bottles for sale on the Moonbloom website at R140 each. (These will eventually be stocked in selected stores.) The product has been tested by microbiologist and regenerative agriculture and soil expert Daniel Fourie.

Directions Dilute 5 ml EMs with 500ml water and spray the mixture on plant leaves, garden soil and compost heaps once a month in

the early morning or early evening. "It will not harm or damage your plants, as long as you stick to the 1% ratio of EMs to water. You can apply a fine spray using a spray bottle or, like us, put it into a gravity feed tank and water the whole garden through the sprinkler system – that's fine too, and what's nice then is that it also gets into your soil," says Gaye.

EMs can also be used to clean toilets and activate septic tanks – in these cases, use a stronger 10% concentration (that is, 50ml EMs in 500ml water). 

Contact  honeymoonfarm.co.za (click on "Online Store" at the top)



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NOSTALGIC FOOD

Spring feast

In his first cookbook, chef and TV cooking show presenter Tiaan Langenegger shares recipes from his mother and grandmother, together with several restaurant hits. Enjoy *Platteland's* spring menu compiled from *Onthoukos: Ouma se treffers vir vandag se kombuis*.

TEXT AND RECIPES **TIAAN LANGENEGGER** PHOTOS **MARLA BURGER** STYLING **LISA PERRIN**

Menu

TO START

Ciabatta with olives
Bruschetta with
tomato, mozzarella
& basil

MAINS

Curried kebabs
(lamb or pork)
Rosemary potatoes
Ina's papino-lime-
and-chilli sambal
(recipe on page 127)

DESSERT

Ice-cream parfait
with cherries
and biscuits

WITH COFFEE

Three-ingredient
shortbread



Ciabatta with olives

I learnt to make ciabatta when I worked at Bertus Basson's restaurant Overture in Stellenbosch from 2011 to 2012. I want to make it easy for people to make ciabatta. You should get 4 lovely loaves from this recipe, depending on what you want. You could also make rolls or breadsticks. Be creative!

Makes **4 loaves**

Preparation time **15 minutes**

Baking time **15–20 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 800 ml (800 g) lukewarm water
- 1 sachet (10 g) instant yeast
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) sugar (optional, but it does help with the fermentation process)
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) salt
- 1 kg good white bread flour (weigh it for accuracy)
- 1 sachet (200 g) olives of your choice, pitted and chopped



THIS IS HOW

1 Pour the water into the mixing bowl of an electric mixer. Add the yeast, sugar and salt and mix everything well until dissolved. Add the flour and olives and use the dough hook to mix the dough until it starts to pull away from the sides.



2 Transfer the dough to a large bowl in which it has room to rise to at least double in volume.



3 Heat the oven to its maximum temperature – usually 230–250 °C. Spray a baking tray with cooking spray, or just sprinkle a little flour on top. Turn the dough out onto a flour-dusted work surface. Use a dough scraper to remove all the dough from the bowl. Don't touch the dough.



4 If you plan to bake loaves, use the scraper to divide it into four pieces equal in size, or divide the dough into smaller pieces for rolls.



5 Very gently shape each piece of dough into the shape of your choice and place it on the prepared baking tray. Bake it for 15–20 minutes until golden brown (this will depend on its size). Enjoy the bread immediately, or let it cool down before freezing it. a frozen loaf can be heated in a hot oven and will taste as though it's been freshly baked! >



Bruschetta with tomato, mozzarella and basil

It doesn't get easier than this. I don't supply specific quantities – it's a feeling rather than a recipe to be followed to the letter.

Serves 4–6

Preparation time 15 minutes

YOU NEED

- fresh tomato
- 1 ciabatta
- olive oil
- a few drops of lemon juice

- 1 garlic clove
- fresh basil
- mozzarella cheese

THIS IS HOW

Quarter the tomatoes, season them with salt and ground black pepper, sprinkle a little olive oil and lemon juice over, and leave to stand for 15 minutes to allow the flavours to develop.

Use the ciabatta recipe on page 120, and cut one of the loaves into thick slices. Lightly brush both sides of each

slice with olive oil, then toast the bread in a very hot pan until you have scorch marks on the bread.

Halve the garlic clove and lightly rub it over both sides of the bread slices immediately after removing them from the pan. A hint of garlic will remain on the crisp exterior of the bread, making a big difference to the final result.

All that is left to add is some of the drained fresh tomato mixture and as much basil and mozzarella as your heart desires.





Curried kebabs

Braai Day is around the corner, and home-made kebabs are in a class of their own. They can also be grilled in the oven. The curry sauce can be frozen for later use and works just as well for lamb and pork.

Serves **4–6**

Preparation time **30 minutes plus marinating time**

Cooking time **10–20 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) oil
- 2 large onions, sliced
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) curry powder
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) turmeric
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) sugar

- 2 cups (500 ml) water
- 1 cup (250 ml) vinegar
- ½ cup (125 ml) smooth apricot jam
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) cornflour, if needed, to thicken the marinade
- 1 leg of lamb, deboned and cubed
- curry leaves (optional)

THIS IS HOW

Heat a little oil in a saucepan over a low heat and stir-fry the onions until soft. Add the curry powder, turmeric and sugar and fry until the spices become fragrant. Add the water, vinegar, apricot jam and bay leaves and cook for 15–20 minutes. The sauce should be thick enough for a marinade, but can

be slightly thickened with cornflour if necessary. Let the marinade cool down to room temperature, then pour it over the cubed meat to marinate for at least 30 minutes, but preferably overnight in the fridge.

Thread the meat onto wooden skewers that have been soaked in water for a few hours (to prevent them from catching alight on the fire), then braai the kebabs over hot coals until cooked to your liking. I prefer them half-cooked so that they remain nice and juicy. The kebabs can also be cooked in the oven at 200 °C for 15–20 minutes or until done to your liking. Let them rest for 5 minutes before serving with a lovely salad and rosemary potatoes. >

Rosemary potatoes

Everyone loves crispy potatoes – this version has a lot more flavour and is a great way to use the rosemary growing in your garden.

Serves 6–8

Preparation time 20–30 minutes

Baking time 7–12 minutes

YOU NEED

- 2 kg potatoes
- 4 cups (2 L) chicken stock
- oil for deep-frying
- 100 g Himalayan salt
- a few sprigs of fresh rosemary, leaves stripped

THIS IS HOW

Cook the potatoes whole, but start the process in cold stock. Boil the potatoes until they are soft but not mushy. Let them cool down, then slice into wedges or chips, whichever you prefer, and place them in the fridge to cool and remain chilled.

Heat the oil for the potatoes in a fairly deep pan. (I usually place a piece of raw potato in the oil – by the time it has turned golden brown and is floating, I know the oil is hot enough. Carefully place the wedges in the oil and fry them until crisp and golden brown. Remove them using a slotted spoon and drain on kitchen paper.

Place the salt and fresh rosemary leaves in a food processor and process it until the salt turns green (or pound using a mortar and pestle).

Sprinkle the rosemary salt over the hot potato wedges.



Nice to meet you!

Chef Tiaan Langenegger grew up in a family that loves good food, and he started dreaming about his own cookbook at the age of 13, when he discovered Jamie Oliver's first book, *The Naked Chef*. Tiaan has worked at some of the top restaurants in South Africa, including Le Quartier Français in Franschhoek and Bertus Basson's *Overture* in Stellenbosch. His career really took off when, along with Mynhardt Joubert, he won the first season of the kykNET reality cooking show *Kokkedoor*. Several TV programmes have followed since. Tiaan lives in Somerset West with his wife, Nadia, and their daughter, Klara. He works as the head chef at Generation Schools, where he prepares food for about 400 children every day.





Ice-cream parfait with cherries and biscuits

My mother often makes this parfait for guests. It can be made well in advance and looks great when you serve it.

Serves **4–6**

Preparation time **20–30 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 1 container (2 litres) vanilla ice cream
- 1 cup (250 ml) Amarula liqueur
- 1 Bar One (52 g) or another chocolate bar of your choice, cut into pieces

- ½ x 300 g packet chocolate-chip biscuits
- 1 container (100 g) glacé cherries
- ½ x 360 g tin Caramel Treat (cooked condensed milk)
- 1 packet (200 g) Whispers malted chocolate balls
- 1 packet (200 g) whole Tennis biscuits
- edible flowers

THIS IS HOW

Let the ice cream soften slightly. Line two loaf tins with clingfilm. Mix all the ingredients, except for the Tennis

biscuits, into the ice cream, then layer the mixture in the loaf tins, alternating it with the Tennis biscuits – make at least 2 layers. Start and finish with the ice cream mixture.

Place the dessert in the freezer for at least 2 hours until frozen. Remove it from the freezer about 15 minutes before you're ready to serve. Place the tin in boiling water for about a minute to loosen the parfait. You can also rub the base with a wet cloth to loosen it. Turn the parfait out of the tin.

Sprinkle edible flowers over the parfait, slice it and serve. >



Three-ingredient shortbread

This is my go-to recipe when I'd like to bake something fast. It makes delicious biscuits, or you can use it as a crust for cheesecake. The dough freezes well too – simply defrost it before you want to bake.

Makes **± 24 biscuits**

Preparation time **10 minutes plus**

refrigeration time

Baking time **12–15 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 1 cup (250 g) butter
- ½ cup (65 g) icing sugar
- 2 cups (280 g) cake wheat flour

THIS IS HOW

Place all the ingredients in a mixing bowl. Use your fingers to rub the butter into the icing sugar and flour to form a dough. Try not to overwork the dough, or the result will be tough. Roll the dough into a sausage with a diameter of

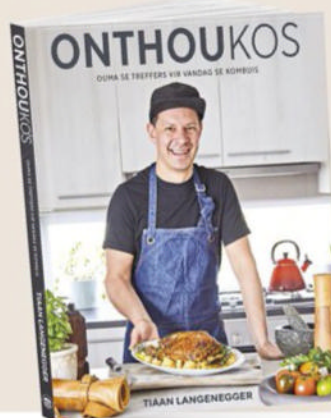
about 4 cm and refrigerate it for at least 30 minutes. Heat the oven to 180°C. Line a baking tray with baking paper.

Cut the dough sausage into slices 1 cm thick and arrange the biscuits on the baking tray. Leave enough space between the biscuits to allow them to spread out while baking.

Bake the biscuits for 12–15 minutes until golden brown. Let them cool on a wire rack before storing them in an airtight container. 

Buy the book

The idea for Tiaan Langenegger's own first cookbook, *Onthoukos: Ouma se treffers vir vandag se kombuis*, was inspired by the number of recipe enquiries he received from viewers after the cooking shows he participated in on kykNET and Showmax. Most of the recipes are inspired by his mother and grandmother's food, and he also shares a number of winners that he learnt to make in restaurant kitchens over the years. There are chapters devoted to breakfast, light meals and starters, bakes and sides, mains, desserts and sweet treats, and sauces. The book is published by Lapa and costs R360 at good bookstores countrywide.  lapa.co.za  011 327 3550



Win!

We are giving away two copies of *Onthoukos*. Visit  platteland.net, click on "Win" and fill in your details with the keywords "Spring Tiaan". The closing date is 23 November 2023.



Sugar & spice

With papinos being in season in springtime, life doesn't get much sweeter than a simple, versatile sambal starring this juicy fruit, balanced by some chilli for a little heat and a zesty dash of lime. This recipe is from Ina Paarman's latest book, *My Favourite Recipes*.



Papino, lime & chilli sambal

The sweetness of the papino in this lovely fresh sambal will complement any spicy dish to perfection.

Serves 4

Preparation time 5 minutes

YOU NEED

- 1 small ripe papino, peeled and pipped (reserve a few pips for garnish)
- 1–2 red chillies, finely sliced
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) Ina Paarman's Lime & Coriander Reduced Oil Dressing (*We usually slip in a third tablespoon... and never regret it. – Eds.*)
- Ina Paarman's Lemon & Black Pepper Seasoning, to taste

THIS IS HOW

Dice or slice the papino. Add the chilli as well as the Lime & Coriander Reduced Oil Dressing. Toss and taste for seasoning. Garnish with a few of the reserved papino pips.

Get the book

My Favourite Recipes

is a magnificent hardcover book with more than 100 of Ina's choice recipes developed over a 50-year career. Order your copy online (R435) at paarman.co.za.



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FOOD



Dutch courage

Dutch baking isn't as flamboyant as French patisserie, but it certainly doesn't take a back seat when it comes to flavour. We visited **Femmy van den Hoek** in Koringberg to learn how to make appeltaart and kletskopjes – along with those tasty bitterballen and croquettes so unique to Holland.

TEXT AND PHOTOS **PETER VAN NOORD**



Femmy van den Hoek was the very first person we met in Koringberg – a cheerful woman with a lust for life and a strong Dutch accent, a beaming smile, and blue eyes that someone else in the town later described to us as “two large Delft plates”. After we lost our hearts to the property that is now Die Wit Huis op Koringberg, we drove back down the main road and noticed the large sign on the pavement in front of her house – a cheerful, round baker’sman invited us inside for cake and coffee at Hoek van Holland. This was in August 2005.

Femmy appeared in the doorway, full of smiles and chattering away. We sat down at a garden table and before long we were conversing like old acquaintances. We heard

all about how, as two young and adventurous newlyweds, she and her husband had immigrated to South Africa from the Netherlands after seeing an advert in *De Telegraaf* inviting people to establish themselves in a country “with a lot of sunshine and low tax rates”.

In 1958, they sailed into Table Bay harbour on the *Randfontein*. “The agent who had arranged our trip had booked us into first class with the higher ups, but tourist class was so much more sociable and there were also a lot more children.

“We spent four days in a hotel in London Road, Sea Point, and bought a car on the Monday, a Vauxhall,” she remembers. They had to find somewhere to live in Cape Town. “I found it so strange that people lived with no curtains over their windows. In the Netherlands this

means the place is unoccupied and available, so I thought all the flats in Cape Town were available!”

The move to South Africa was not a shock for Femmy. “I like the sun, and the South African climate is fantastic, plus we found the language easy. Also, my father had had a great interest in South Africa and there was a historical connection for me – as a 15-year-old I’d corresponded with a South African penpal.”

After their arrival in Cape Town, Femmy worked at Mobil as a typist whereas Jan, a trained tiler and fitter and turner, found work at Dairybelle as a fitter and turner.

In 1969, they bought their first house in Table View outside Cape Town, which is where Femmy started her crèche, Klein Duimpie, for Dutch friends.



It is not too often you’d find Femmy sitting still, but when it does happen, she prefers two cups of coffee – from proper cups, of course.





FAR LEFT Lucy the pit bull is Femmy's shadow.

LEFT This recipe book – the source of Femmy's appeltaart recipe – has been through a lot.

ABOVE Dutch ornaments and shopping lists on a shelf in her kitchen.

After Jan was appointed as a transport manager in Saldanha, they bought a caravan and moved there. They lived in the caravan for five months before renting a house.

Then a house right on the beach in Parker Crescent became available, one with a large back stoep on the beach. They wasted no time and moved in on 16 August 1977, “the day Elvis Presley died”. This was where Jan and Femmy, both avid cooks, ran their restaurant Hoek van Holland until 2001, when they retired and moved to Koringberg.

In this quiet village, they ran a backpackers’ lodge called Owls’ Nest for a few years before buying a house on the main street and reviving Hoek van Holland.

Femmy was still speaking enthusiastically, keeping one eye on activity in the street, when Jan appeared in the doorway. Jan, the quiet, dry one – mostly serious, with just the occasional grin emerging from deep inside.

“Can I offer you coffee and cake?” he asked.

“But of course!” Femmy jumped up. She looked at us: “Today we have delicious fresh appeltaart, which you definitely cannot enjoy without cream! And two coffees, of course. We make it the Dutch way.”

We ate and laughed and chatted like old friends. She told us all about her boterkoek, her klets koppen (or klets kopjes), her bitterballen...

Can one buy any of these delights from her? “But of course!” she said. “I have them all in the freezer.”

Since that day in 2005, we have regularly ordered appeltaart or bitterballen or boterkoek, fresh. For ourselves and later also for family and friends, all of whom are just as crazy about Hoek van Holland’s baked goods.

After Jan died suddenly in 2007, at the age of 70, Femmy closed the coffee shop because it was too much work for one person and the business was too small to allow for appointing someone. Not that she has been idle. She always has a project on the go: She’s either building a plunge

pool, planting a small vineyard block on her property, dividing her home to accommodate a tenant, or building a lapa. And while she is a grandmother of many and a great-grandmother to a few, she still drives her own car. Her lips are sealed about her age.

Her passion for baking has not waned one bit. “I enjoy baking so much! It gives me great satisfaction! It was particularly relaxing when Jan was still here, because he would do all the cleaning up.”

Any baking secrets? “I only use the Spar own-brand margarine! I find that butter turns rancid too quickly! And I also believe in Maggi, which I buy from the Dutch section in the SuperSpar in Piketberg.”

We asked Femmy to give us a masterclass so that we could learn how to make our three favourite dishes from her kitchen: bitterballen, Dutch apple pie and those delicious, chic klets kopjes.

Femmy van den Hoek. What a wonderful way to become acquainted with a town! >



Bitterballen

Femmy says that when the birthday of the Dutch king is celebrated, this tasty meat snack is traditionally served with a bitter orange liqueur, hence the name.

YOU NEED

- 1 kg stewing beef (Femmy says Jan always used brisket)
- water
- ½ onion
- bay leaf

FOR THE RAGÙ

- 75 g butter
- 150 g flour
- 200 g of the prepared meat
- 400 ml of the cooking liquid
- 2½ teaspoons (12,5 ml) salt
- ½ teaspoon (2,5 ml) freshly milled black pepper
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) Aromat
- 1½ teaspoons (7,5 ml) Maggl Liquid Seasoning (see tip below)
- flour
- 2 eggs, beaten
- breadcrumbs

THIS IS HOW

Cook the meat, onion and bay leaf in sufficient water for 2-3 hours or until it is tender and falls off the bone. Remove the meat from the liquid, place it on a plate to cool and then remove all bones, fat and sinew. Strain the liquid and set it aside.

Place the cleaned meat in a food processor and pulse until the meat has been pulled apart evenly.

Make the ragù Melt the butter in a large pan and stir in the flour. Slowly add the cooking liquid, stirring the mixture quickly as you do so. (A balloon whisk works well.) Now whisk in the egg yolk. Once the sauce is thick and smooth, add the pulled beef and all the seasoning. Mix thoroughly, then spread out the mixture on a baking tray covered with

baking paper. Place the ragù in the fridge for a few hours to chill. In the meantime, prepare three bowls: one containing flour, another with beaten egg and a third containing breadcrumbs.

Now roll out golf-ball-size rounds of the ragù. First roll each ball in the flour, then in the egg and finally in the breadcrumbs. Arrange the rolled bitterballen on the lined baking tray. They can be deep-fried immediately or frozen for later. Heat the oil until hot – test it by dropping a bread cube into it. If the oil bubbles immediately, the temperature is just right (180°C on a thermometer). Slowly place the fresh or frozen bitterballen in the hot oil and quickly fry them until they are beautifully golden brown all over – about 4-5 minutes. Serve with a lovely ice-cold beer.

Tips

- 1 Maggl Liquid Seasoning can be replaced with soya sauce to which you have added a splash of Worcestershire sauce. But the real deal is available at shops with a Dutch aisle, such as Jasmyn Farm Products at Hartbeespoort and the SuperSpar at Piketberg. Otherwise do some shopping online at makro.co.za, or visit britishcornershop.co.uk – type “Maggl seasoning” in the search bar. And yes, they do deliver to South Africa.
- 2 Femmy makes her own breadcrumbs by drying out slices of regular store-bought bread in an oven at 100°C. Pulse the dried bread in a food processor to turn it into crumbs.
- 3 You could add aromatics such as grated nutmeg or finely chopped fresh parsley to the ragù. Experiment according to your personal tastes.

Bitterballen vs. croquettes

The recipe for croquettes is exactly the same as for bitterballen.

The only difference is the shape: Bitterballen are shaped into round balls whereas croquettes are elongated sausage shapes. >



Authentic Dutch appeltaart

Just add cream to this apple pie for a “real feast”, says Femmy. “There *has* to be cream, see!”

YOU NEED

- 270 g cake flour
- 135 g sugar
- salt
- 165 g butter (or Spar margarine), at room temperature, cubed
- 450 g (about 4) Granny Smith apples, peeled
- ½ cup (80 ml) seedless raisins

(Femmy uses Safarl Bakers Mix)

- ½ cup (125 ml) cinnamon sugar
- 1 egg yolk, beaten

THIS IS HOW

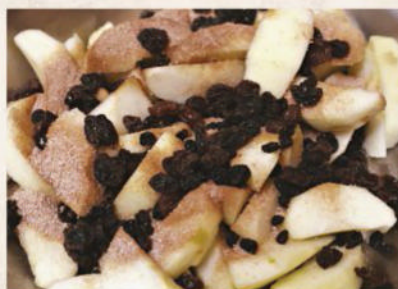
Mix the flour, sugar and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer and add the butter. Use a dough hook to mix it until you have a good, supple dough. Spray a springform tin with a diameter of about 18-20 cm with non-stick cooking spray and heat the oven to 180°C.

Use your fingertips to press two

thirds (about 400 g) of the dough evenly into the bottom and against the sides of the tin.

Quarter the apples, then slice each quarter into three pieces. Combine the apple chunks with the raisins and cinnamon sugar. Place mixture on top of the dough in the tin.

Roll the last third (200 g) of dough into sausages that you can use to create latticework on top of the pie. Place it in the oven to bake for about 1 hour until cooked and golden brown.





Kletskepjes

These stylish little biscuits, also known as kletskoppen, are dead easy to bake and truly delicious. They are usually made with almonds but Femmy prefers to use salted peanuts instead.

YOU NEED

- 30 g cake flour
- 40 g butter
- 100 g soft brown sugar
- 35 g roasted, salted peanuts (or you can replace them with the traditional almonds)
- ½ tablespoon (7,5 ml) water
- ¼ teaspoon (1,25 ml) ground cinnamon

THIS IS HOW

Heat the oven to 210°C. Mix all the ingredients using a stand mixer. Shape the dough into marble-sized balls and arrange them 5 cm apart on a baking tray sprayed with non-stick cooking spray. Don't place them too close together, because they will spread out while baking.

Bake the kletskepjes for 8 minutes. Remove them from the oven, let cool for about 30 seconds and use a spatula or palette knife to carefully lift each biscuit – this helps prevent them from sticking. Store the biscuits in an airtight container to enjoy with tea or coffee. 



To everything there is a season...

Turning a new leaf in the platteland, one becomes more aware that there is “a time to every purpose under heaven”, to quote Ecclesiastes (and The Byrds, of course). And village life may come with surprising advantages when things don’t go according to plan, writes **Alexander Lea**.

ILLUSTRATION DIEK GROBLER

Summer - January 2016

There is a general sense that things are going from bad to worse, but sometimes they don’t – like the time my mother moved from Durban to a small Swartland village called Koringberg, about 118km from Cape Town. The town suited her as an artist, and recently divorced. Koringberg has nothing, so the living costs are low, the air is fresh, and the horizon is open.

Her new patch of earth wasn’t much. There was a small house in a bad shade of maroon and a deeply neglected garden. But my mother is an artist.

“Look!” she said, about to show me the photos, “the garage space is *perfect* for a studio!” Previously, her studio was in the basement – a dark, small and damp space with no doors or windows.

When I looked at the photos of the plot, I smiled to hide my impression, but she is my mother: “Yes, the house is ugly and the garden’s dry,” she said, “but it has potential.” She pointed out the hedge of rosemary and, tucked behind it, a rustic pool shaded by an enormous old pepper tree. “It just needs some TLC, I’m just saying!”

I felt uneasy about Koringberg. I am used to places with cafés and restaurants. Or a hospital. All she had in Koringberg was less than half her furniture, the art she’d made, her dogs, a single friend, this house and its garden. As we unpacked boxes in the harsh summer, cold sarongs

over our shoulders, surrounded by drought-reddened hills and bare farms, the dry and oppressive heat evaporated my cheerfulness.

The quiet and starry nights of Koringberg helped our attention to drift away from schedules, deadlines, projects and lawyers.



We could speak about how we were feeling. My mom would say – despite the heat, the raw stress of divorce, the scorpions – she was fizzing with excitement. She could make this house beautiful.

Autumn - May 2017

In Koringberg, surrounded by farms and filled with gardens, the land is prepared for seed over May. Farmers comb the soil while the gardeners churn it. Wheat and canola are then planted in the dust.

After uprooting her life in Durban, my mom had grown her friendships using an age-old method: supplying sunlight held together by water (read: wine), like trees that funnel water to other trees. After all, one tree cannot make a forest, or a local climate, by itself. Trees don't hoard resources too, because the deaths of other trees would make gaps in the forest's canopy. More trees would get uprooted by storms, and the forest floor would dry out over the summer. I think Koringbergers must have a tree-morality because they share plenty of wine together.

Sharing, of course, was not limited to wine. She would know who is doing what and going where, who is ill and needs a meal, and folks would know when *she* is ill and needs a meal (and, in time, she was going to be very ill). She came to know that So-and-so's partner can't drive, and, in case of an accident, she might be the one who is called to take him to the nearest hospital. Just in case.

We hope we never have to make or receive a call like that. Hers came at three in the morning. They made it to the hospital. In moments like these, the roots of a community tied themselves more closely together.

Winter - July 2019

Sometimes, things *do* go from bad to worse. Divorce matters. Accusations. Stubbornness. A lump in her breast. To remove the

“Everything in her garden flowers, even the *spekboom*. The cancer has not come back but Tigger's bark did.’

breast cancer, she needed surgery, radiation and medication. Yet the calloused surface over a hardened heart cannot be removed by surgery, radiation or medication.

Even if the operation and treatment went well, cancer carries a high risk of depression. In time, she could have laid in bed justifiably weighed down by fear and self-pity. Instead, she charged into the face of the enemy.

The charge would start in the mornings while drinking coffee in her bed warmed by the dogs. She'd say, “Look!”, gazing through the large bedroom windows, “The sunbirds!” After a few seasons, the aloes had matured enough to flower. She pointed out that the fluttering sunbirds were a pair and, behind them, the drowse of a small mountain.

Once out of bed, she'd ask me to water the reservoir of succulents and her vegetable garden while she would feed the birds and her dogs. There were three now: Her dachshunds from Durban, Jack and Daisy, and Tigger, a retriever-ridgeback mix that had lost its bark after being re-adopted again and again.

After everyone had been given care, Mom would drive to the treatment centre. It took the better part of her day and the treatment was painful and debilitating. Her friends offered her places to stay somewhere closer, but she always went back to Koringberg. She went back to her large sunlit studio, her stoep, her bed. She went back for her dogs, the garden, and its critters; the air, the light, the quiet, and power of the landscape. Plus, the Koringbergers had filled her fridge with home-cooked meals. She came back so that Koringberg and its locals could take her into their care.

Perhaps depression has something to do with carelessness, an absence of tree-morality.

Spring - September 2022

The wild flowers of the area throw such a good party that even though we don't know the names of the hosts, our hearts are joyful to see them. Surrounded by flowers and the creatures they attract, something in our chests is dislodged and rises. We feel inspired. We feel grateful. Colour is wrapped with emotion. Pink is glee. Purple entices. Orange is excitement. White calms. Red woos.

Even the light in Koringberg changes from the pollen and dust. Smog absorbs light, making cities darker, but dust and pollen scatter it. It changes the wavelength of the light, giving it a soft yellow hue. Yellow is cheerful.

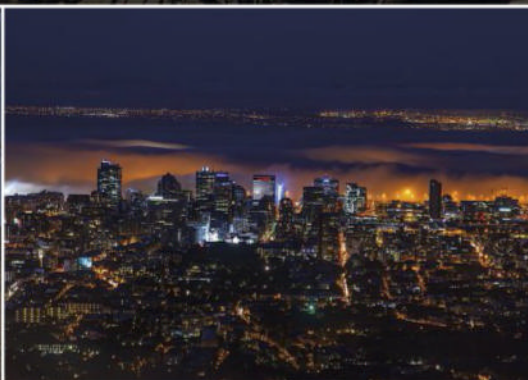
It's been seven years since my mother moved, and she was right. The house is now a pale blue which matches the plumbagos, the inside walls the colour of wheat fields. The pool is decorated with pink peppercorns. Everything in her garden flowers, even the *spekboom*. The cancer has not come back but Tigger's bark did. And whenever new visitors arrive, they all say something like, “Oh! This house is beautiful!”

Sometimes, things don't always go from bad to worse. A bald field will erupt with an abundance of flowers, crops and creatures. People care enough to feed a sick friend and drive them to the hospital before dawn. Dogs find a home. People heal from cancer. A local landscape and its community become familiar, and something dear emerges. What is touched by courage and tenderness becomes more beautiful, like my mother's house in Koringberg. 📍



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