

Platteland

AUTUMN 2023

The slow life is the good life

PHOTO ESSAY

Break your journey with a visit to Colesberg

PIETER HOFFMAN

One man spearheading change in Carnarvon

Harvest to table

Recipes from the Sandveld

KLIPRAND

Barely there...

Barrydale

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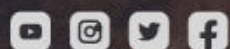
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AUTUMN 2023

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PHOTOS GREG COX, PETER VAN NOORD, DONNA LEWIS AND WILLEM VAN DER BERG,



Cover

PHOTO PETER VAN NOORD

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PHOTOGRAPHED
AT SNYDESKLOOF

EDITORS' LETTER



PHOTO ANRI MATTHEE

go! Platteland

The slow life is the good life

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The wonders of a garden

It's as if we've been retreating deeper and deeper into our shells over the past few years. Many people were forced to start working from home, and the distance between us just grew increasingly wider. Our homes have become our entire world.

A part of this world is the greenery that you plant and nurture in order to make life more beautiful, and thus more enjoyable – even if it's a fern suspended in a macramé plant holder in your living room.

A garden is a living system, something that breathes and gives life and changes and dies. It is truly precious. It makes you move, bend, stretch and perspire – and clears the cobwebs from your mind. A garden with all the life forms it contains makes you cry and laugh and burst with pride.

Yet sometimes we forget that a garden (and the veld!) can also be a sustainable source of food. We picked the brain of the remarkable Rina Theron (page 116) – regular Platteland readers will recognise her name. When the full lockdown was announced in 2020, this retired farmer's wife from Leipoldtville looked at her garden and set herself the challenge to see how long she

could survive off it. The result is her second book, *Sandveldkos: Van Tuin tot Tafel*, which she self-published with the help of her daughter, Laetitia Sullivan. We were so inspired by Rina's project that we have already tried several of her recipes, including the fabulous spekboom cake (see page 125).

Let us follow her example and plant more food in our gardens, but also look for edible wild plants in your area. Learn from others – people of all cultures – what you can do with edible plants that you don't know, such as amaranth, or morogo, and wild garlic. You'll broaden your knowledge not only of nature but also of our country's people. And that's something we need now more than ever before.

But we're definitely not forgetting that a garden is something that could simply give you joy. Turn to page 82 and join us on a walk through the open gardens of Hogsback and Bedford. Be inspired, feel that new spring in your step and go get your hands dirty. You won't need to wait long to reap the fruits of your labours.

Johan & Peter



The Winter 2023 issue will be distributed countrywide from **Monday, 29 May 2023**. Email us at helloplatteland@gmail.com if by the end of that week you have not been able to find a copy.

Meet the people
of the Lowveld



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Chitchat

Live the slow life... and have more fun

winning letter

We're a family of plattelanders, and we are all avid readers of your magazine. By the way, I like the feel of the new paper – I think it was a good idea to change it.

I'm sending you a story that I think aptly illustrates your motto, "The slow life is the good life."

We live in the beautiful Boland town of Wellington. But even here the pace of living has picked up considerably. When we bought our house with the deck that overlooks one of the large mountain peaks, we dreamt of often kicking back there with coffee or wine and good friends. Or even simply to light a fire by ourselves while we admire the natural beauty of the Boland. Today, we don't do it nearly enough.

We do, however, have one significant advantage: everybody on my side of the family farms in the Pofadder area. That is where we and our children come to a halt a few times a year and get a new perspective on life on the stoeps of Makkesplaas and Millerton farms.

Aside from plenty of rest and long chats on the stoep, our kids get to play again the way children ought to play. We're not talking about playing with Barbies and Lego and other shiny plastic toys. No, this kind of playing involves old tins and mud.

One late afternoon, the gang of five – three farm cousins and two town cousins – came home from the veld reluctantly after we'd called

them for the umpteenth time. The sun was already casting its very last weak beams. Could they please sleep in overalls tonight, they asked earnestly.

My farm sister and I could tell these kids had serious business up their sleeves. "We've started a cattle farm," Anmari announced. "And we'll need to get going early tomorrow morning," she added



George Miller, Amé Coetzee, Andréa Miller, Anmari Miller and Adriaan Coetzee on their "cattle farm". This photograph was taken on Stan and Marietjie Miller's farm Millerton.



Suné Coetzee from Wellington will receive an Ina Paarman gift pack, worth more than R1 200, for her winning letter. It contains a selection of products, including a stainless steel rack with 14 spice mixes and a complete set of Ina Paarman's recipe booklets. Convenience is key when it comes to Ina Paarman's products, but not at the expense of taste, flavour and health. This extensive range of products is made in the traditional way from fresh seasonal ingredients – perfect for lending every meal a gourmet touch. Turn to page 135 for Ina's macadamia nut bobotie recipe, and visit paarman.co.za for more recipes or to shop online.

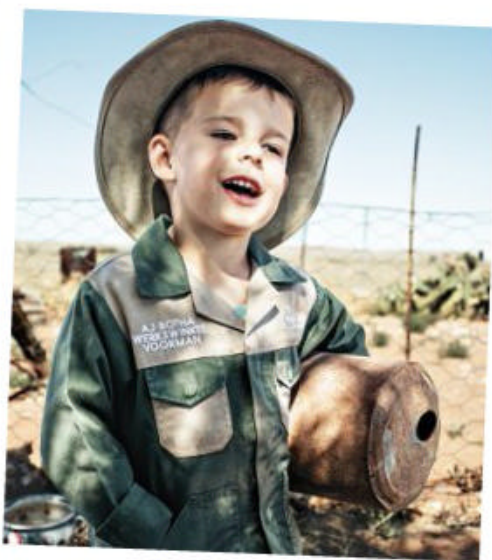


**WE'D
LOVE
TO HEAR
FROM YOU!**

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



ABOVE A variety of impressive cakes on display at the "bakery".
ABOVE RIGHT Young George sold cakes for R5 apiece.



as she beckoned the others to the bathroom for their ablutions. That evening they wolfed down their *boerbrood* cheese sandwiches and *droëwors* in their rush to get to bed.

The following morning they were up at the crack of dawn to get backpacks ready with snacks for the day's work on their cattle farm. Their rations consisted mainly of biscuits that Oupa André had bought at the New Year's dance in Pofadder, and the rest were a few sweets, a bag of Kakamas raisins and a few pieces of *skuinskoek* (baked using Tannie Elize's yeast starter – it's delicious!)

I caught my sister's eye. An unpleasant warm wind had started blowing across the farmyard that morning. "I bet you they'll be back by teatime to have tea and biscuits with us on the stoep," I said. During the holidays we make sure not to miss teatime at 10:30 and coffee at 15:30. Of course, there would be fruitcake, biscuits, *skuinskoek* and *boerbeskuit*. Then we solve one another's problems and plan and dream.

At tea time, lo and behold, it was only the two of us alone on the

stoep – even though the wind was blowing even stronger, there wasn't a child in sight. Just before lunch I started getting worried. Gingerly, phone in hand, I walked over to their cattle farm.

The "kraal" was adjacent to the yard of farmworkers Lena and Piet. Lena was sitting on a garden chair, keeping an eye on proceedings and reprimanding the two youngest boys whenever they had one of their regular tiffs.

I received a warm welcome on the cattle farm. There was no standing about: one cousin was herding cows on horseback (on a large tin drum). Another was raking the pastures. The three girls were busy in the calf pen. They separated the boy calves from the girl calves – they weren't sure exactly why they'd decided on this agricultural strategy.

Much later, the gang checked in for a brief lunch. Then they disappeared again.

By sunset we had to beg them to come in to take a bath. In the meantime they had started a bakery and a vegetable garden too, they reported proudly. They used the

milk from their cows in the bakery. And they figured it would be a good idea to sell some fresh vegetables at the bakery as well. They had raked their little fields, and tumbleweed would serve as vegetables. But we were more than welcome to visit the bakery the following day to buy cake from them. "With *real* money," young George cautioned. The funds were intended for buying ice cream in Strandfontein the following week.

On the Friday morning, Marietjie and I walked over to the children's farm bakery with hands full of R5 coins. The mud cakes were inventive and interesting, the variety impressive – there was anything from farm cakes to make-up cakes and car cakes. And everything cost R5. A *real* R5.

There I stood between the cattle kraal and the farm bakery, and our children's rooms came to mind. Their rooms are not large, but they have all the toys I consider beneficial and important. And yet the kids often wander through the house, aimless and bored.

Here, five children played for five days, from early morning until sunset, with old tins, mud, two old rakes and a watering can. Because the "vegetable garden" had to be irrigated with real water, naturally.

Slowing down and scaling down might be the secret to enjoying playtime more, I decided. Kids need time, space, sand and tins more than they needed real toys. And, of course, some biscuits and *skuinskoek*.

**Suné Coetzee
WELLINGTON**

The photographs were taken by Suné's sister Marli Visser, the Bushmanland food blogger we featured in an article in the Summer 2021/22 issue. – Eds >



Memories of De Rust

What a joy it was to read your article on the town that is so close to my heart [in the Summer '22-'23 issue of *Platteland*]. I'm getting such nostalgia... Your magazine may be the reason so many people are relocating to the platteland.

I grew up and went to school in De Rust. It was a tiny school – there were only seven of us in my matric class, for instance. My father was the mathematics teacher and also the deputy principal. Why he moved there from Paul Roos Gymnasium in 1959 I wouldn't know, but his heart never left the Little Karoo.

I'm happy that the school is doing well these days thanks to an excellent principal and teachers.

For several years, my parents were also the guardians of 50 girls at Lentelus Orphanage, housed in an impressive Victorian double-storey next to the former church hall. (The building has since been demolished – what possessed the church council?) An enormous stinkwood-and-yellowwood table that was used for Communion was one of eight such tables in the orphanage.

In 1966, my father bought a large, neglected house at 43 Schoeman Street. He cleared the bushes from the adjacent property and established a superb fruit and vegetable garden. Fertile soil.

My mother sold the property in 1996, and these days, No. 43 once again looks run-down and seedy.

The lovely house at 37 Schoeman

Street, the one with the red roof, also has a history. One Tannie Nel lived there, and I still have a beautiful small antique table that my parents bought at the auction of her furniture. After Tannie Nel, the musical Van Rensburgs lived there, and then Oom Tom Schoeman bought the place. He moved there after retiring from his positions as the music teacher at the school in De Rust and the educational college in Oudtshoorn. He was quite a character! Well-travelled, studied in Vienna, wrote three books... I remember one of them featured farmer's wives from the De Rust area – the names were pseudonyms but we recognised them! He died about four years ago.

When our family arrived in De Rust, it was a dusty hamlet. I experienced its transformation: the construction of the tarred Schoeman Street; the installation of a water supply system (we'd had to make do with water tanks and a ditch); the tarring of side streets; the construction of new tennis courts; the building of the new church hall in 1963 and the purchase of the August Förster grand piano for R1500; and then a major event: getting electric power.

One more story from the past: I was in Std 9 when Jans Rautenbach, Katinka Heyns, Koos Roets, Hermien Dommissie and various other actors came to our town and school with the

stage production *Pappa Lap*. What a thrilling experience it was!

I still visit De Rust from time to time, and in July 2022 I stayed at Rus In De Rust. I remain in contact with the two lovely daughters of Mr Pienaar, a teacher who used to live here, and we were friends with the sexton who lived in the house for many years.

What a privilege to have grown up in such an idyllic environment! Everyone knew one another. The centres of our social life were the church and the school and the tennis club – perhaps that's still the case today.

I don't know many people in De Rust any more, except for the Schoemans of Voëlgesang, the Coetzees of the Mikro supermarket, and Swepie le Roux of the farm Doornkraal. (I remember getting beside myself with excitement whenever his parents, Minister PK le Roux and his wife Hobbie, would arrive at church in their long, swanky black Cadillac!)

About eight years ago I presented a Christmas music concert in the church, in collaboration with Andre and Yolanda Botha, and Antoinette Olivier from Potchefstroom. I found it really special to see so many familiar faces in the church. Many of those people have since passed away.

Congratulations on the article, and best wishes with your good work.

**Bennie van Eeden
STELLENBOSCH**

What does the weatherman say?

Thank you for a wonderful magazine. A suggestion: It would be great if you could include the average rainfall as well as average winter and summer temperatures in your “My Town” features (such as the one on De Rust in the latest issue). Sometimes we readers wonder about the climate, for example, in a place like Kareedouw, from a previous issue.

Andre Noeth
CLARENS

Thank you for your excellent suggestion, Andre. Turn to page 41 to see how we’ve done it in our feature on Barrydale. – Eds



I just had to photograph it!

During the past summer holiday I had only four days to go on a quick trip to the Karoo. I was on my way to Loxton and had already driven past this house on the main street (the R63) when I decided to turn around to photograph it.

A man was sitting on the stoep. I walked up to the garden gate to ask his permission to take a photo. I was pressed for time and in my rush I forgot to ask him his name.

I think he went to sit inside afterwards. I wish I had Dana Snyman’s knack for chatting to strangers and finding the loveliest stories that way. I’d like to go back, then I’ll definitely stop there again – I’m sure they have an interesting story to tell.

Werner Esterhuysen
WALKERVILLE

Turn to page 138 to see Werner’s 180° photo. – Eds

Gone fishing

I write in connection with your article on the town of Vanderkloof in the Spring 2022 issue. In September 2019 we toured through the Northern Cape with friends and visited, among others, Orania and the Vanderkloof Dam before we travelled as far as Port Nolloth and McDougall’s Bay to see wildflowers.

At the Vanderkloof Dam, where the water level was quite low, an interesting sight caught our eye. Grey herons were sitting in a row on the dam wall, and would fly down to catch fish in the shallow water below the wall. Above the wall we could see fish like barbel and carp, but they were a little too big for the herons.

Leon Venter
KIMBERLEY >



In search of a magazine

I have not been a fan of magazines for a number of years now, mainly due to the exorbitant prices charged for very poor content.

Earlier this year, the Winter issue of *Platteland* caught my eye and I browsed through it while in the shop. I was totally engrossed with this absolutely awesome magazine and bought it.

I then bought the Spring issue, and, once again I read it from cover to cover, thoroughly enjoying each and every article.

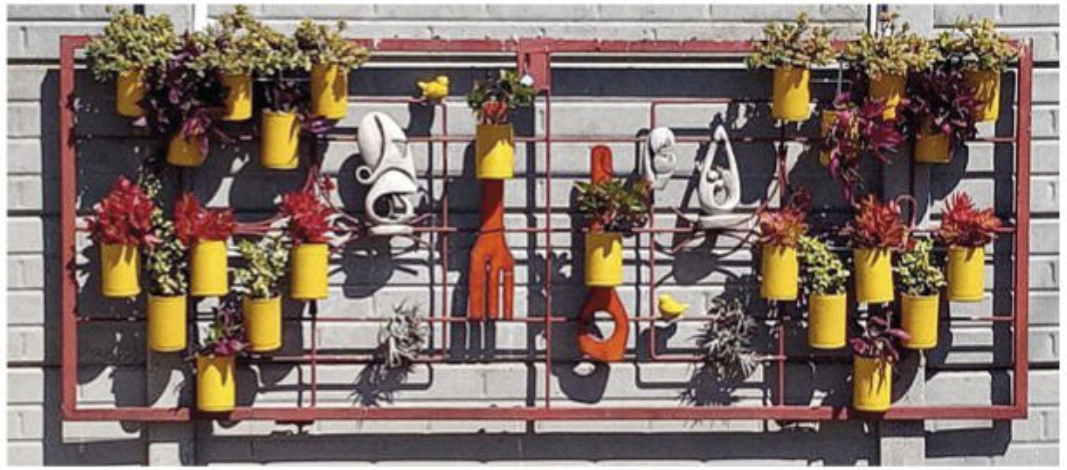
To say that I am distraught at this moment is putting it mildly: I cannot find a copy of the Summer issue, having been into at least 15 different outlets, all the way from Blueberry Shopping Centre to Sunninghill – not a single copy on the shelves, only a couple of copies of the Afrikaans magazine in a few of the stores.

First, please advise if you know of any stores in the Northern Suburbs of Johannesburg where I might obtain a copy of the Summer issue, and second, how do I subscribe to the magazine so that I don't find myself in this predicament again? (And, yes, the printed copy – I really like holding a book in my hands.)

Just before Christmas, I was shopping at the Pick n Pay in Sunninghill and rummaged through their rather disorganised stand of magazines. I was so excited to find an English copy of *Platteland*, I did a little happy dance right there in the store.

**Heather Helfer
JOHANNESBURG**

Thank you for letting us know, Heather. The help of our readers is crucial to get copies of the magazine to the right places. First, let us know right away if you have trouble again, but also speak to the manager and make him or her aware of the situation – urge them to stock the magazine. – Eds



Can you do the garden can-can?

How does your garden grow – can your garden do the can-can? Mine can!

The *Platteland* article on recycling 2-litre bottles prompted me to introduce my own concept of converting redundant used cans. They are not to be dumped but preserved for many useful means.

I turned mine into a plant rack. I fitted the cans to a safety gate that had been just idling in the back yard without a purpose. All I needed then was a hanging bracket rail, spray paint and sealer.

I then planted a variety of plants in the cans – yellow is the colour I prefer, because it enhances the various plants. The open spaces in between I filled with ornamental figures.

**Beverley le Grange
Peerless Park North, KRAAIFONTEIN**

So *that's* the face behind the marmalade!

While holidaying in Onrus over the festive season, I popped in at a new deli-style shop and bought a jar of sweet orange marmalade for my husband, who loves marmalade. It was delicious!

So when I opened the latest issue of *Platteland* I was delighted to read a feature about Elana's – the marmalade maker! Thanks to *Platteland*, my husband and I now know the story behind the brand, and we are planning to make a weekend trip to Robertson to visit their factory shop and have some pancakes and coffee!

And that's what I so love about the magazine: sharing stories about our wonderful country and its people, encouraging us to get out there and visit new towns, spaces and places – and, in doing so, support our local economy! Thank you for inspiring me to garden, cook and learn more about our amazing country and its people. The magazine inspires me to dream about living outside of the city one day, and it is a reminder as to why I am proudly South African!

Congratulations on your first decade coming up. I look forward to toasting the magazine again in 2033! Hopefully from my stoep in a small town...

**Lisa Pellatt
WYNBERG, CAPE TOWN**



Koringberg kids hit the streets for a six

Ek n Jy Street Cricket in Koringberg, in partnership with the local non-profit company Ek n Jy and the Sporting Chance Foundation, trained more than 90 boys and girls from our community in a nine-week programme that aimed to offer a healthy and positive alternative to the social evils of our time.

After weeks of league play-offs from October 2022, the Ek n Jy Street Cricket teams met at the crease to contend for the finals. Mixed teams of boys and girls from the ages of 7 to 13 years old gathered on 3 December 2022 for the much-anticipated final matches.

The hot tarmac was a sea of blue, as all the kids and coaches wore blue shirts and caps funded by Ek n Jy's generous sponsors. As if the competition between the teams was not enough, the volunteer coaches had adopted a spirit of serious "winning attitudes", ready to take their teams to the final matches for the coveted title of the Ek n Jy Street Cricket Champions 2022.

When the first ball hit the metal drums that served as wickets, the vibe was set for the morning: excited parents, aunties, uncles, grandparents and other Koringbergers were yelling encouragement.



Junior team the Tigers: At the back are Menolene Ramburg, Marsha Lee Sauls and Theo-Reese Jagers (coach); in the middle are Duran Sauls, Chesnay Barends and Bradwill Ramburg; and in front is Sebastiaan Carolus.

The Blue Eagles, coached by Linda van Rooi, won the Juniors league, and Coach Peter Faroa's team Koring Pit won the Seniors league.

The programme was an excellent launchpad for Ek n Jy to continue our ongoing interventions with the Koringberg community children. We are super proud to have had the sponsor backing and the expertise of Sporting Chance to launch this massive undertaking in our small village.

The change among our village kids and coaches has been palpable, and we hope the ripple effect will afford us the opportunity to launch more of these programmes. We have talent here, and we hope to nurture these kids and secure successful sporting futures.

**Cecilia Mackay & Elizabeth de Klerk,
Directors of Ek n Jy
KORINGBERG**

We are proud of our village! Tell us about similar projects in your town – and send pictures! – Eds P



Neylin Greeff (middle) and his batting partner Vanito Killian try to score another run in one of the heats as wicketkeeper Rayneack Jansen and fielder Aiden Cloete (right) stand ready to take a wicket.

News & diary



Jackye Riddle says one of the best ways to enjoy pitayas is in the form of a fruit shake.

Summer starting to wind down is no reason for your social calendar to cool down too – an abundance of festivals and events has been planned for autumn. Take the time to explore the harvest season on an unconventional farm, and visit a “play school” for dogs.

COMPILED BY ANRI MATTHEE

Taming dragons on a pitaya farm

Although pitayas – better known as dragon fruit – can be found in most supermarkets these days, the cultivation of these bright-pink tropical fruit is still in its infancy in South Africa.

One of the country’s first commercial producers, Jackye Riddle, unexpectedly found herself

in the business of growing dragon fruit. She’d bought an Eastern Cape citrus farm and planned to retire there. Because there were citrus trees on the farm, she started farming citrus on a small scale as a hobby. By the time the trees were becoming old, Jackye had been bitten by the farming bug and was

looking for a new challenge.

She started looking into niche fruit with which to experiment and soon spotted a strange-looking vine on a neighbouring farm. At that stage, there were no commercial dragon fruit farms in SA, but Jackye monitored the wild dragon fruit plant for two years to see what it needed to thrive.



Open days on the farm give visitors the opportunity to pick pitayas by the crate – or the wheelbarrow!

“There was no information available locally so I started to correspond with farmers in Israel and Australia,” Jackye says. “It was slow going but I didn’t mind. To me, it’s about the journey.”

At last, after much planning and research, she planted her first dragon fruit in 2011.

Autumn on the farm

Jackye’s farm near Patensie in the Eastern Cape is the only commercial dragon fruit farm in the province, and her fruit is sold mainly in the west of the country under the label Dragon’s Den Exotics.

Getting this exotic fruit to shops, however, is a complicated process that requires careful monitoring.

“Dragon fruit plants aren’t like citrus trees that bloom once a year. It’s more like a rose. The plant will bloom and then bloom again about five weeks later,” she explains. The process repeats itself several times between October and April. Yet regular flowers don’t necessarily mean you’ll get fruit in abundance, because the chances of pollination are slim. “The flower opens for only one night,” Jackye says. “If it doesn’t rain and the flower is pollinated, a fruit will grow, but otherwise the flower just drops to the ground.”

The fruit takes anywhere from 30 to 45 days to ripen, so autumn is the last harvest before the plants enter their winter growth phase.

Pink, red, white and yellow...

Jackye isn’t just in it for selling the fruit – she also wants to contribute to the available knowledge about pitayas. She plans to travel to North and South America later this year to visit farms and chat to farmers.

Jackye has collected more than 250 varieties. She is experimenting to see which varieties are easily pollinated, grow better in her area’s climate and, of course, have the best taste. Although the ones with the pink-and-green skin and white flesh are the most familiar to us, there are also varieties with yellow, pink, purple and even dark-red flesh.

Jackye has also tried making all kinds of products with the fruit: from jam to wine, and even gin. But what she loves best is using it in fruit shakes, ice cream and home-made buns. (The recipe on the right was inspired by a Vietnamese baker.)

On certain days, Jackye’s farm is open to the public and visitors can pick their own fruit. These events are usually announced at short notice because the picking season is short. Keep an eye on the farm’s Facebook page so you don’t miss out on the experience.

Contact dragonsdenexotics.co.za

jackye@farmferndale.co.za

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



Jackye’s pink buns

YOU’LL NEED

- 300 g dark-red dragon fruit flesh, mashed (the dark-red flesh gives the buns their pretty pink colour)
- 500 g white bread flour
- 80 g white sugar
- 5 g instant yeast
- 40 g butter, cubed
- 5 g salt

METHOD

Mix the dragon fruit and flour in an electric mixer using a dough hook. Combine the sugar and yeast and add it to the fruit mixture. When the mixture is 90% incorporated, add the butter and salt. Let the mixer run for 30 minutes – the dough will become very elastic.

Roll the dough out and divide it into 10 portions – each portion should weigh just under 90 g. Roll the portions into balls and arrange them on a baking sheet or place them in the hollows of a muffin pan. Leave in a warm spot for a few hours to rise.

Preheat the oven to 120°C.

Use a spray bottle to spray the buns lightly with cold water. Place a deep baking sheet upside-down over the baking sheet to shield the buns from the direct heat – this ensures the buns remain pink.

Bake for 5 minutes, then lightly spray with water once more. Turn the oven temperature up to 150°C. Spray the buns with water every 10 minutes for a total baking time of 20–25 minutes to prevent them from turning brown.

Tip The buns are very dense and only stay fresh for a day or two – but they’ll probably be eaten before they get a chance to go stale! >



Nannie de Villiers and her dog Gruff handle the interviews for potential classmates.

It's a (wonderful) dog's life

In February 2020, when Nannie de Villiers signed the rental contract for the site of her new doggie daycare, she—like all of us—was unaware of the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic would bring. Yet not only did her business survive, but it has also thrived. Thanks to its uniquely playful “personality”, Dogs Day Out stands head and shoulders above traditional dog kennels.

“It’s like dropping your dog off with friends for the day,” Nannie describes her daycare in Strand, near Cape Town.

Last year, the canine playschool was voted best small business by KFM’s popular Best of the Cape Awards.

Nannie told us how her dream became a reality.

Where did the idea for Dogs Day Out come from? From 2003 to 2006, I lived in Atlanta in the US, where I had a dog named Zulu. He went everywhere with me, from work to restaurants. That’s where I became

aware of the doggie daycare concept and realised how much Americans do for their furry friends. I was saying then already that I wanted to do something similar someday. I’ve always been a little nuts for animals!

What are the benefits of daycare for dogs? Most dogs, especially in their first two years, are very social and energetic. It’s almost impossible to do enough with your pup to stimulate or exhaust them sufficiently. At a school like ours, the dog gets to burn all that excess energy—energy that otherwise would have resulted in chewing on your furniture or digging Kimberley’s Big Hole in your garden. And when you pick up your pup from daycare at the end of the day, the two of you can just bond because all the extra energy is gone.

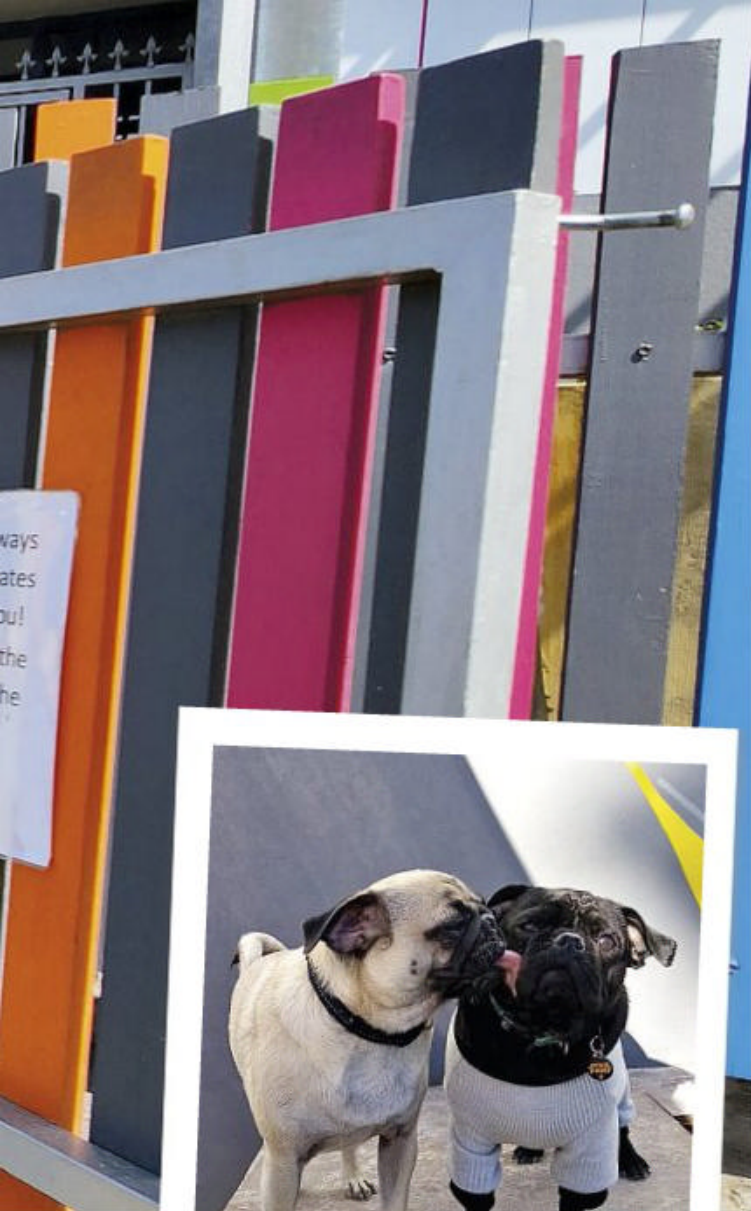
The dogs also learn to communicate with their friends—that’s important, because different breeds have different ways of playing.

But people bring their dogs to

us for other reasons as well. The dog might have separation anxiety, the neighbours complain about the dog’s barking all day, a dog is grieving the loss of a dog partner, or exhibiting destructive or aggressive behaviour, or its owners might be living in an apartment and need to go out to work.

Tell us more about your approach.

We have four open play pens inside and one large sandy terrain outside, with obstacles to climb as well as a small swimming pool. The dogs rotate between the different play areas. Each group has someone with them to check that the area is kept clean and there’s no bullying going on. The dogs basically have a “traffic cop” with them all day—people who also offer a steady supply of scratches, of course! Sleepovers are only possible for socialised dogs who are able to share a bed with other dogs. In those cases, we WhatsApp the parents pictures and short videos to assure them their pup is safe and sound.



What do owners need to know before bringing their dogs for the day? When people first contact us, we help register the dogs and book their first temperament-test day. First, they meet my dog, Gruff, and Gruff and I check whether we're the right fit for your dog and which group they'd suit. If a dog doesn't pass the interview with Gruff, we must unfortunately decline the application.

We require all the regular vaccinations, including for rabies and kennel cough – the latter is like a bad cold that makes dogs cough. It's usually contracted in public spaces such as parks and beaches where there are other dogs. Because it's so contagious, a disease like that is very bad news for a daycare like ours.

Contact dogsdayout.co.za

info@dogsdayout.co.za

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

[Dogs Day Out South Africa](https://www.facebook.com/DogsDayOutSouthAfrica)

060 988 1010 (Visit Dogs Day Out at 52 Mynhardt Street, Gants Plaza, Strand, Western Cape)

BELOW LEFT If you're working long hours at the office, taking your dog to daycare is a good idea – it will learn valuable social skills from its classmates.

BELOW The friendly team at Dogs Day Out put the dogs *and* their owners at ease.



Holiday tips

It's never easy to leave your buddies behind when the family goes on holiday, but with some good planning, all of you can have an enjoyable, relaxing holiday. Nannie has the following advice:

- The moment you take the first sock or sneaker from the cupboard, your dog knows you're going away. Then they begin to stress because they know they might be left behind. Avoid this situation by taking your dog to a kennel or dog hotel (like ours) the day before you leave.
- It's important that your dog is familiar with its accommodations. Our policy is that no dog may board here if they haven't come for at least three play days. That way, the dog is familiar with the environment and knows there are friendly people and doggie buddies to keep them company until Mom and Dad

return to pick him up. If the dogs don't run inside enthusiastically when their parents bring them, we tell them right away that something's wrong.

- If someone is taking care of your home and pets, make sure you have it in writing that they'll spend a certain amount of time with your animals every day when they go to feed them. People often pay good money for pet sitters but do not take into account that person might have 15 other clients on that particular weekend. Dogs and cats alike need and deserve attention. Leave their favourite toys and instructions for the pet sitter. Moreover, it's perfectly acceptable to ask for a daily video of your pet to see how they're doing. >



Time to start planting winter bulbs

The cooler autumn months are a good time to get active in your garden if you'd like to welcome pops of colour during the cold of winter.

Most bulbs can be divided into one of two groups: summer and winter bulbs. In nature, winter bulbs typically grow in winter-rainfall areas and go into hibernation during the summer months.

In general, winter bulbs flower beautifully in early spring, but some types will start blooming in late winter. Regardless of their flowering season, all winter bulbs must be planted in late autumn so that the cooler soil temperatures can trigger the growth cycle.

Hadeco is an online bulb and garden retailer that offers gardeners everything their hearts may desire. Hadeco's experts have the following advice for preparing your winter garden:

Start right

1 In early autumn, get your flowerbeds or pots ready by using well-

draining soil – this prevents the bulbs from rotting. Winter bulbs prefer semi-shade, with morning sunlight and afternoon shade. If you plant the bulbs in full sunlight, you must apply good mulch and water them more often or they will dry out.

2 Dig your flowerbeds about 30cm deep and prepare the soil by working in generous amounts of compost, along with a handful of bonemeal (or superphosphate if you have dogs that might dig it up) and organic fertiliser to ensure plenty of nutrients for your bulbs. Lightly water the beds and leave them fallow until it's time to plant.

3 The second week in May is usually a good time to get most bulbs in the ground. (Wait until June to plant tulips.) When the time is right, just follow the instructions on Hadeco's packaging. It will also tell you when the plant should flower and how tall it will grow.

4 Remember to buy special plant food for your bulbs. Feed the bulbs as soon as you've planted them, and then again after a month in the ground. Simply sprinkle the food over the soil, water it and cover it with a top layer.

Water is life

Water is critically important for successful bulb growth. Remember to water often – and long enough so the water soaks deep into the soil. Turn on your sprinklers for about 10 minutes at a time every fourth day, so the soil is watered slowly and thoroughly.

If you live in a water-scarce area, consider rather planting your bulbs in pots. That way, you can water them until the water comes out the drainage hole – then you'll know the water has soaked all the way through so the roots can grow in wet soil.

Choices, choices

Hadeco offers a wide range of winter bulbs. This family business

Hadeco produces its bulbs on seven Highveld farms.



was established by two young Dutchmen who emigrated to South Africa after World War II ended in 1945. Today, it is one of the largest producers of bulbs in the world, and is run by the descendants of one of the founders. Their bulbs are cultivated on seven Highveld farms, and they also import exotic varieties that are then acclimatised to South African conditions.

Daffodils and tulips are always popular, so order these early before



Daffodil bulbs usually sell out quickly, so order yours now if you want to see these beauties in your garden this year.

they're sold out. Simply store the bulbs in a cool spot until you're ready to plant them.

Other favourites are buttercups (*Ranunculus*), anemones, fairy bells (*Dierama*), Dutch irises, hyacinth, grape hyacinth (*Muscari*) and starflowers (*Ipheion*). Indigenous beauties include *Freesia*, *Tritonia*, *Ornithagalum*, *Sparaxis* and *Babiana*.

Hadeco is always in search of new, exciting bulbs, so follow them on social media or sign up for the newsletter to be the first to hear of finds.

Check out this blog for more tips on prepping your bulb garden for winter: hadeco.co.za/the-beginners-guide-to-preparing-your-winter-bulb-gardens

Contact  hadeco.co.za

 online@hadeco.co.za

 [@hadeco_bulbs](https://www.instagram.com/hadeco_bulbs)  Hadeco Bulbs

 010 140 1300

WIN

5 readers will each win a Hadeco gift pack containing hyacinth, daffodil, eipheion and muscari bulbs. To enter, visit  platteland.net, click on "Win" and fill in the form using the keywords "Autumn Hadeco".

Join in the buzz about beekeepers

South Africa is gearing up to host Apimondia Africa, the largest regional bee symposium on the continent.

Apiculture, also known as beekeeping, is a fast-growing business in Africa, and event organisers wish to invite all bee enthusiasts to join in. Whether your interest in bees is professional or just a hobby, there are several insightful items on the schedule to expand your knowledge on the subject.

There'll be discussions on topics ranging from bee conservation and biology to quality control in honey and the role of legal policy in beekeeping. Attendees will also get the chance to enjoy several exhibits as well as talks by experts.

It's a golden opportunity for beekeepers to network with others from all over Africa, and for those in the honey business it's a chance to find all the best types of honey under one roof.

Where and when? 21–24 March at the Durban International Convention Centre in KwaZulu-Natal.

Contact  Apimondia Africa

 apimondiaafrica2023.org.za

 apimondiaafrica@gmail.com >



Dates to diarise*

WESTERN CAPE

Street soirées

STELLENBOSCH

1 & 15 March

Drostdy Street in Stellenbosch is once again the venue for enjoying some of the Boland's best wines on a balmy Wednesday evening. These social street parties are only held in the warmer months of the year, so don't miss out on the last two soirées of the season.

Tickets R170 per person at Plankton.mobi

Contact 📞 021 886 8275

📱 STBStreetSoirees

Spier Light Art

SPIER, STELLENBOSCH

11 March – 10 April

This impressive festival of light, sound and video art is only in its fifth year but is already a favourite on the Boland arts calendar. It attracted more than 11 000 visitors in 2022, and this year's event promises to be even more spectacular.

Contact 📱 spier.co.za

📧 info@spier.co.za

📞 021 809 1100

📷 spierwinefarm

📱 spierwinefarm

🐦 SpierWineFarm

Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK)

OUTDSHOORN

1–9 April

Art will be centre stage in Oudtshoorn once again during the 27th KKNK. Get ready for excellent plays, workshops, talks, music and stalls. It's also easier to organise accommodation this year thanks to the festival's collaboration



WESTERN CAPE

Constantia Fresh

CAPE POINT VINEYARDS, NOORDHOEK

5 March

This popular annual garden party promises to be a celebration of food, drink and above all, freshness. Constantia Fresh has become one of the country's most popular outdoor wine festivals in the 13 years since its inception. Join the crowd for a glass or two and relax on a cool Cape Town lawn.

Tickets R750 (wine, glass & food included) from Quicket

Contact 📱 constantiafresh.com 📧 constantiafresh@gmail.com 📞 083 265 2405 📷 constantiafresh

📱 ConstantiaFresh 🐦 ConstantiaFresh

with TravelGround (and its Afrikaans portal LekkeSlaap).

Tickets Available from Webtickets

Contact 📱 kknk.co.za

📧 info@kknk.co.za

📞 044 203 8600 or

065 285 2337

📷 kknkfees 📱 KKNKfees

🐦 KKNKfees

Vintage & Vine Faire

MORGANSVLEI COUNTRY ESTATE, TULBAGH

27 May

This old-school agricultural show is a showcase for the Tulbagh area's award-winning wines, world-class olives and other delicious produce and products. Visitors are invited to explore the town's rich heritage

through traditional cuisine. Bring along the whole family for a day of music, games and fun.

Tickets R120 per person (entrance free for under-18s)

Contact 📱 tulbagh tourism.co.za 📧 info@tulbaghtourism.co.za 📞 023 230 1375 📱 Tulbagh Vintage & Vine Faire

GAUTENG

Corks & Forks

IDLEWILD

COUNTRY ESTATE, OLIFANTSFONTEIN

25 March

Join the festivities in Olifantsfontein for the first ever Corks & Forks. As the name suggests, it's all

about food and wine. The organisers are promising a warm atmosphere in which to enjoy the offerings of top winemakers and chefs. Best be quick – tickets are limited!

Tickets R280 per person from Webtickets

Contact 📱 corksandforks.co.za

📧 marketing@corksandforks.co.za 📷 corksandforkssa

📱 Corks and Forks

Hobby-X

KYALAMI GRAND PRIX CIRCUIT, JOHANNESBURG

4–7 May

Since the first Hobby-X in 1998, this exhibition has gone from strength to strength. Today, it's an extremely popular gathering of crafters and hobbyists. There'll be demonstrations, practical workshops and interesting stalls – and, of course, you can't ask for a more perfect networking opportunity!

Contact 📱 hobby-x.co.za

📷 hobbyxinsta 📱 Hobby-X

FREE STATE

Nampo Harvest Day

NAMPO PARK, BOTHAVILLE

16–19 May

This agricultural mega-event needs no introduction. As a trade expo, it offers something for everyone involved in the industry. It's well worth attending to stay abreast of the changing needs, demands and expectations of farmers and role players in SA's agricultural sector.

Contact 📱 nampo.co.za

📧 info@grainsa.co.za

📞 068 174 4820

📷 nampoharvestday

📱 Nampo Oesdag - Harvest Day

EASTERN CAPE**The Great Kenton Wine Festival****KENTON-ON-SEA
17–19 March**

Visit the town that has been described as “the barefoot capital of the Sunshine Coast” for a long weekend of wine, food and fun. Visitors can amble between the town’s bowls, tennis and deep-sea clubs to taste the wines of 24 of SA’s best wine producers.

Tickets R350 per person at greatwineweekends.com

Contact greatwineweekends.com/events/the-great-kenton-wine-festival
karoowineclub@gmail.com
 083 599 9302
[f](https://www.facebook.com/KarooWineClub) Karoo Wine Club

Stoep Tasting 2023**GRAAFF-REINET &
NIEU-BETHESDA
25–28 May**

“The Karoo’s best wine weekend” celebrates its 10th year in 2023. The two host towns are perfectly suited for exploring on foot, and visitors can look forward to enjoying products from 70 wine producers and a variety of craft beers on offer. So go exploring – glass in hand, of course.

Tickets R500 per person at greatwineweekends.com

Contact greatwineweekends.com/events/stoep-tasting-2023-the-10th-celebration/
karoowineclub@gmail.com
 083 599 9302
[f](https://www.facebook.com/KarooWineClub) Karoo Wine Club

EASTERN CAPE**Karoo Food Festival****VICTORIA STREET AND JENKINS CREEK, CRADOCK
27–30 April**

If you love food and the Karoo, you should definitely visit Cradock at the end of April. The focus of this festival is to offer visitors from far and wide an authentic traditional experience of local flavours and world-renowned Karoo lamb. Various participating restaurants cater for all palates with their specialist Karoo dishes.

Tickets At the gate and local shops

Contact butlersandkie@gmail.com 076 258 4796
[f](https://www.facebook.com/KarooFoodFestival) Karoo Food Festival

**MPUMALANGA****Wakkerstroom Music Festival****WAKKERSTROOM
17–21 March**

The aim of this annual event is to promote classical music in South Africa and to create an inclusive opportunity for young and upcoming musicians to share the stage with established artists in an intimate small-town setting. Regular visitors won’t be disappointed, and first-timers are in for quite a few surprises.

Contact wmfestival.co.za
info@wmfestival.co.za
 076 129 8180
[wm_festival](https://www.facebook.com/wm_festival)

KWAZULU-NATAL**Great Outdoors Expo
SUNCOAST CASINO,
DURBAN****24–26 March**

This expo offers a range of outdoor products and experiences to awaken the adventurer in you. For three days, visitors will have the chance to check out off-road vehicles, sports cars, camping gear and much more.

Tickets R80 per person (R50 for students and pensioners; entrance free for under-12s) from Webtickets

Contact goexpo.co.za
support@bactive.com
 082 559 2080
[f](https://www.facebook.com/GreatOutdoorsExpo) Great Outdoors Expo

VARIOUS VENUES**Art Therapy
Introductory Seminar****13–15 March and****27–29 March: Sea Point,
Cape Town (R5 950
per person)****14–16 and 21–23 March:
Garden Place, Johannes-
burg (R6 760 per person)****22–24 May: Online via
Zoom (R5 350 per person)**

Art therapy is a creative treatment process that can benefit people of all ages to assist in personal growth, insight and development. The skills learnt in this seminar can be applied in various contexts, such as at work or in your personal relationships.

The seminar is facilitated by Samantha Davis, an internationally trained and registered art psycho-therapist with more than two decades’ experience in the field. During the three-day seminar, participants will explore art-as-therapy and be offered the opportunity to experience it for themselves.

Please note that doing the workshop does offer you the knowledge and experience to practise art therapy in your own life, but it does not equip you to practise as an art therapist.

Bookings arttherapy.co.za

Contact arttherapy.co.za
info@arttherapy.co.za

083 326 6655

[arttherapysouthafrica](https://www.instagram.com/arttherapysouthafrica)

[f](https://www.facebook.com/ArtTherapySouthAfrica) Art Therapy South Africa

[ArtTherapyinSA](https://www.facebook.com/ArtTherapyinSA)

**News about markets and bazaars**

Let us know of events in your region that are taking place between June and August 2023 – the deadline for inclusion in the magazine is Friday, 31 March 2023.

helloplatteland@gmail.com platteland.net [f](https://www.facebook.com/Platteland) Platteland

* Closer to the time of an event, go online or contact the organisers to find out whether it is going ahead as planned.

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Vintage book safe

with a magnetic closure, a nifty hiding place for small valuables from R150 each

In Good Light [@ingoodlights](#)
ingoodlights@gmail.com



Scatter cushion cover

in polycotton with Tiger Tiger motif (60 cm x 60 cm) R320

Shnook [shookthebrand.com](#)
[@_shnook_](#)



Leather-and-wool slippers

with Rhino and Floral design R980 per pair
 Dean E Collection [dean-e.co.za/shop](#)

[@deanecollection](#)



Fruit syrups

Lemongrass & Lime, Elderflower and Rose Geranium (200 ml) R85 each

Die Langhuis Barrydale [@gertvandemerwe](#)
gertvdm@netactive.co.za
 028 572 1954 or 082 450 0873

Let's go to town

Our autumn shopping trip, looking for interesting artisanal products, took us to places like Dysselsdorp, Eversdal, Green Point, Hermanus, Pacaltsdorp, Parkview, Riversdale, Somerset West, Van Reenen and Vermaaklikheid.

BY MARIAN VAN WYK
 PHOTOS GREG COX



Handmade cotton rope leashes R230 and leather-and-rope collar from R200

– can be made to order

Woofies and Co [@woofiesandco](#)
chasemctavish99@gmail.com



Baleia Cold Pressed Extra Virgin Olive Oil

made from olives grown on the banks of the Duivenhoks River, near Vermaaklikheid (375 ml) R139

Baleia [@baleiawines.com](#)



Handwoven palm-leaf basket bag

(40 cm–52 cm) with rope handles, finished by Capetonian artisans R1 335

Chommies [@chommies.com](#)



Hand-crafted ceramic bowls

with textured fabric imprints (95 mm in diameter) R95 each
 Cleilap Ceramics [@cleilapceramics](#)

corlie.cleilap@gmail.com >

SHOPPING



Home-made Blah Blah Fish Paste (125 g) about R60

The Foyer Coffee Shop & Home Bake

thefoyerparkview@gmail.com

082 811 2240 or 082 458 1352



Wine bag R295 and
mini air plant hanger R109–R126
woven in the Southern Cape of
JungleVine string, which is produced
in Laos by spinning the strong fibres of
tropical kudzu, a fast-growing legume
Sustainable Strings sustainablestrings.co.za



Tortilla Chips in a resealable bag, made
from organic, non-GMO maize (250 g) R44
Salsa Verde with a mild bite, made from
smoked jalapeños (380 g) R45
El Burro elburromercado.co.za



Green Bee biodegradable cleaning products

Dishwashing Liquid (5 l) R230

All Purpose Cleaner (2 l) R185

Degreaser (1 l) R140

Hand & Body Wash (2 l) R250

Glass bottles optional from R35 each

Green Bee thegreenbee.co.za



Linen-cotton-blend runner
with Bee motif (44 cm x 1 44 cm) R480
Candles from R220 each
Jus Lié Collection juslie.co.za
[@jus_lie_collection](https://www.instagram.com/jus_lie_collection)



Tote bag
with inner pockets, made by hand
of recycled denim and cotton
– each bag is unique about R300
Buzzy Betsy [@buzzy_betsy](https://www.instagram.com/buzzy_betsy)



Koffieman Alles Koffie Alta Pete
100% Arabica Micro-Roasted Coffee
(444 g) R220

Koffieman koffieman.co.za

Porcelain cups from R150 each

Emma Day [@day_studio_pottery](https://www.instagram.com/day_studio_pottery)



The Cultured Whey drinks
(500 ml each)
Kombucha Vinegar R128 for gut health
Neuro Tonic R220 to reduce stress
and enhance mental clarity
Beet Kvass R140 to aid digestion
Faithful to Nature faithful-to-nature.co.za

Shwe-shwe cotton planter
(22 cm x 22 cm) R223
**Hand-painted hanging
rope planter**
with a drip tray
for a 15 cm-pot R210
Scat Cat Co. scatcat.co





Handmade almond milk soap bars
in the fragrances (clockwise from bottom left)
Peppermint & Rosemary, Lemongrass &
Grapefruit, Naartjie & Cinnamon, Lavender
& Geranium, Activated Charcoal & Tea Tree
R66 each and a pine soap stand R39 each
Hello hellosoap.co.za [hellosoap_sa](https://www.instagram.com/hellosoap_sa)



Shisa! Coffee Pine Firelighters
consisting of pine cones dipped in a mixture
of candlewax and coffee grounds, and wicked
for easy lighting R65 for a packet of six
Boschendal Shop boschendal.com
and selected Spar shops and farm stalls
Shisa Firelighters
shisafirelighters@gmail.com



Unpasteurised Old Harbour Beer
Double Gold Lager (440 ml) about R30
Handmade Hair & Body Artisan Soap
containing Old Harbour Beer, coconut oil
and olive oil R120
Hermanus Brewing Company
hermanusbrewery.com
[oldharbourbeer](https://www.instagram.com/oldharbourbeer)



Kaapse Limoncello
to be enjoyed as an aperitif or over ice cream,
or used as a marinade (375 ml) R195
Cape XO Buchu Brandy
made from Colombard and Chenin Blanc
grapes, and twice distilled in copper pot stills
(375 ml) R280
Kaapse Liqueurs kaapseliqueurs.com



Linen scatter cushion covers
with Stem motif in Rust (60 cm x 60 cm) R550
and Double Stem motif in Green
(60 cm x 40 cm) R455
Scat Cat Co. scatcat.co



Linen-cotton-blend dishtowels
with original ink designs, from left,
Lemon, Olive and Big Bee
R185 each
Jus Lié Collection juslie.co.za
[jus_lie_collection](https://www.instagram.com/jus_lie_collection)



**Handmade macramé
plant hanger** R250
Craft Girl craftgirl.co.za
macramecraftgirl@gmail.com



Yamù loose-leaf herbal tea blend
Calm Night for a good night's rest, and
Refresh for a natural energy boost
(50 g each) R100 each
Yamù yamubotanicals.com



Chilli products
Roasted Jalapeño & Coriander Hot Sauce,
Chipotle Chilli & Lime Salt, Rojo Chilli & Lime
Hot Sauce and Roasted Pineapple Habañero
Hot Sauce (100 ml–125 ml) R40–R60 each
El Burro elburromercado.co.za [P](https://www.pinterest.com)

The miracle worker of

arnarfon

We like stories about platteland communities that rally together to rescue their town, but usually the process starts with one person – and sometimes that *one* person makes such a big difference that it seems like a miracle...

TEXT AND PHOTOS WILLEM VAN DER BERG



Pieter Hoffman cherishes antiques – he believes they tell stories of the past and of their previous owners, and he loves a good story.

Carnarvon's main street and the Astoria Hotel (on the left) are looking run-down, which is why walking into one of Pieter's renovated buildings feels like being transported to a different place.



Carnarvon lies on a lovely alternative route if you're travelling from the Western Cape to Upington, Kimberley or Bloemfontein and want to avoid the busier roads.

A long time ago, before our country's roads were tarred, many travellers, hunters and missionaries would stay over here. Originally known as Harmsfontein, the village was renamed in 1874 to honour the fourth Earl of Carnarvon, Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, who was the colonial secretary at the time.

Drive through Carnarvon today and it is clear that the prosperous

years have gone. At the Astoria and Carnarvon hotels, the beds are empty – it is only in the bars that you'll find people. Children and adults wait for small change and other meagre handouts in front of the Spar, Hot Stuff, Pep, Jacobs Broers general dealer and the co-ops. The views across the veld are marred by litter.

But then there are the immaculate buildings in Victoria Street that house the Lord Carnarvon Small Hotel, Lord's Kitchen and Die Medisynekas.

In Daniël Street, the beautifully renovated Lord Carnarvon Guesthouse catches your eye. And in Church Street, two Victorian-era Karoo-style cottages have been given a new lease of life.

In the platteland, where money is generally tight, signs of renewal like this border on the miraculous.

Pieter Hoffman knows this. He has lived in Carnarvon for most of the 40 years of his life.

"In this part of the Karoo, magic doesn't just happen; you have to make it happen," he says in the lounge of his Lord Carnarvon Guesthouse, where naturalistic oil landscapes and heavy furniture put you in mind of the British tradition of afternoon tea.

Pieter is the creative force behind the restoration of these buildings, thereby making sure that more and more people don't merely drive through his town but stay over.

Chatting to local people about Pieter, the response is invariably



LEFT “Riette Jacobs gave me this tray,” Pieter says. “It had been a Christmas gift to her mother during those golden years when shopkeepers gave their loyal clients such valuable objects.”

BELOW LEFT The Blikkies Bar at the Carnarvon Hotel is not as busy as it used to be, and many nights the hotel has no guests at all.

BELOW Svensbo Cottage is one of three cottages in Church Street that Pieter has rescued from dilapidation – for this work Pieter won the “Most Beautiful” category in *Home* magazine’s 2022 Fix it with Flair competition. Next door is Ouma Alie, which he is currently renovating.



that if it weren’t for him, Carnarvon would be a lot worse off. Surely he could have done the same thing anywhere else, if he’d wanted to?

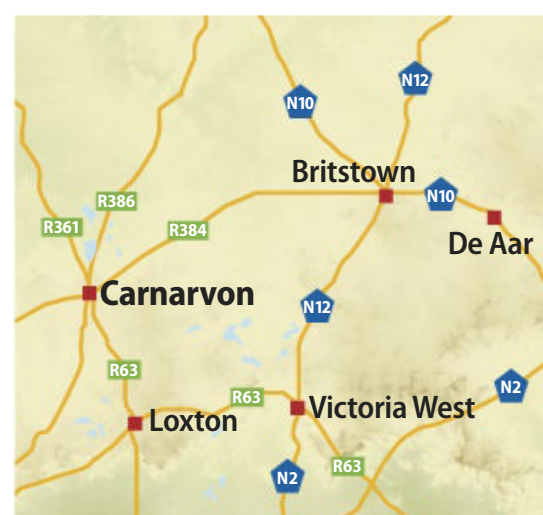
“That’s true. But I believe in the now. And at the moment I’m here. This is where I want to make a difference. One wants to be remembered, after all, to leave something behind for the day when you are no longer around. Because for as long as others remember you, your legacy will live on.”

IT’S THE SAME PHILOSOPHY that Pieter applies to the renovations he tackles. He thinks about the people who once lived in these homes and goes to great trouble to ensure that a part of them lives

on. The four men responsible for the building and restoration work, also Carnarvon residents, have lots of experience working on Karoo houses. Before they started working with Pieter, they spent many years with Gerrit Louw’s Carnarvon Boukontrakteurs.

“There’s nothing these men cannot make happen,” Pieter says. “They use what we have available here to make every last thing I dream up a reality.”

Once the renovations have been completed, he starts to work his magic, using his wonderful collection of antique furniture, memorabilia from people in the area, and works of art to give each place its own identity, a unique story. Between these walls, >





ABOVE Pieter had this wallpaper specially designed – it features pictures that tell Carnarvon’s story. He calls it Blue Karoo, and you can buy fabric with this print at Die Medisynekas.

TOP This lovely entertainment and braai area is at the back of Svenksbo Cottage.

RIGHT Pieter’s interiors have the perfect combination of vintage, modern touches, and interesting objects – things like this star pendant lamp that make you want to ask where on earth he found them.



you can imagine hearing the voices of the people who lived here a long time ago and left behind something of themselves in the Hardemans Karoo.

Pieter knows many of these stories. As the only child of Stephen and Lizette Hoffman, he was often the only youngster present when they'd visit friends in the area. He was accustomed to the company of adults. The stories told by ooms and tannies became *his* stories. He wasn't one for playing children's games, and he doesn't remember ever throwing a ball. But he does remember Tannie Tolla, the owner of the Mathilde Fashion Saloon in Carnarvon.

"Such a grand name on the gable of her building, almost like a stage name. But everyone knew her as Tolla, and only spoke of Tolla's shop. Tannie Tolla with her scarf and

red Scottish terrier brooch."

Sometimes, on a Sunday, the Hoffmans would dine with Boet and Zennie le Roux on their farm Skurwekloof. Oom Boet and Tannie Zennie, each with a smouldering cigarette in hand, would await them on the stoep.

Pieter recalls sitting in a deep white chair in their sunroom, a copy of the Sunday newspaper at hand, feeling like the owner of a castle. "I would admire the beautiful sideboard that Oom Boet had bought at an auction. In the passage, I would look at myself in the mirror that made you appear thinner – Tannie Zennie always said it was her favourite possession."

THE ARTIST Jo Finburg, who was known for her candle-painting, would often visit a friend of hers in Carnarvon. She gave one of >



ABOVE The artist Jo Finburg gave Pieter this candle with a Delftware-inspired painting when he was a boy; it awakened dreams in him of a Karoo where art and beautiful things were abundant.

BELOW Before Pieter renovated this building, it was known as The Palace, a place where he once attended a wild foam party. The entire exterior was painted with zebra stripes.





ABOVE Pieter's guest houses are filled with works of art. Many of the paintings in this photo, previously displayed at the Carnarvon Hotel, are by the travelling artist Werner Fördelmann.

OPPOSITE, TOP This display cabinet at the pharmacy and gift shop Die Medisynekas is like a treasure chest. The drawers hold many interesting things, says René Vass, who has worked here for many years.

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM Mia Louw, a student at the event-management institution the Aleit Academy in Somerset West, did an internship with Pieter. She says it's thanks to him that Carnarvon has been attracting more visitors.

her popular blue Delftware-inspired candles to Pieter's mother, "to match her turquoise dining set", Pieter recalls.

He was fascinated by Jo and her art. "I wanted to paint candles blue, too, but my watercolour paint wouldn't work. Nor did my mother's blue permanent marker, which she'd use to label packets of meat for the freezer."

One December morning, Jo let Pieter know that a surprise was waiting for him with his Ouma Alie at the Astoria Hotel. "I ran... and there, on Ouma Alie's dressing table, was my own Delft candle. Specially for me. When I hold it in my hands now, I think about a boy in the Great Karoo whose dreams were probably different from those of most other boys. He would paint on the leftover computer paper that his mother brought home from the bank, then put the paintings up on the wall when visitors were expected – where they couldn't miss seeing them."

Did he dream of being an artist?

"Oh, I don't know. I never wanted to think too far ahead. The uncertainty of the future always scared me. It wasn't easy to be an old soul at schoolgoing age."

After completing matric, Pieter had no idea what he wanted to do, so off he went to the farm that his father had bought. Stephen was the manager of the Standard Bank branch in the town for many years, but he was also interested in farming.

Twist Niet is 120km north of Carnarvon and 30km from Vanwyksvlei. A quiet part of the Karoo. It was especially quiet when Pieter sat alone in the old farmhouse at night, with only the radio for company and candles and paraffin lamps for light. "And then I would paint a little. During the day I oversaw the building of dams and in my own way I tried to renovate the house. I didn't know anything, but something kept gnawing at me... a wish for that house...to live again." >





AFTER ONE YEAR on the farm, Pieter did a tourism course in Stellenbosch, and then he lived and worked in England for two years to earn some pounds.

Upon his return to Carnarvon, he bought an old house right away and started to renovate it. The building, which had housed a British officers' mess during the Anglo-Boer War, became the five-bedroom Lord Carnarvon Guesthouse.

Those five bedrooms have grown to 30, and Pieter is still busy fixing and beautifying buildings further along Church Street. Moreover, he has realised his dream for the homestead at Twist Niet for himself and his family; it's a place he doesn't have to share with guests, a place to retreat to when he needs silence and space to breathe.

As always, the restoration work was done with the utmost respect

for heritage, so when Tannie Bettie Vermeulen, who was born on the farm, walked in the front door and touched the old hat stand in the hallway, she felt right at home.

"I find it really special that I have these pieces of other people's lives around me and can preserve them. Almost all of them have had an influence on my life. I hope that, like them, I will also leave behind traces of myself."

So, does he not think that what he has already accomplished means a great deal to Carnarvon and the community?

"Oh, I hope so. We'll have to see."

He unlocks doors to rooms with beautiful paintings and furniture and objects that tell many stories. And then there's the Green Room... "I don't usually let people inside this room. My most beautiful possession is hidden away here."

He switches on a lamp, and in the muted light a peacock's feathers shimmer next to a golden curtain. "This is Henry," he says.

"I had wanted a bird like this for a long time. Henry comes from a farm in the area. The farmer gave him to me and it felt a little like planning a murder. I had to keep his body cold in my freezer before I could take him to the taxidermist."

The only other thing Pieter might like to acquire is a classic car, "one of those cars with a long, low-slung body and giant tail fins".

Otherwise, he continues to spruce up Carnarvon and ensure that stories are not forgotten.

"I can't stop now. As Tannie Tolla would say when asked whether she was planning to retire, 'I can't let Carnarvon down like that.'" **P**

 Pieter.Hoffman



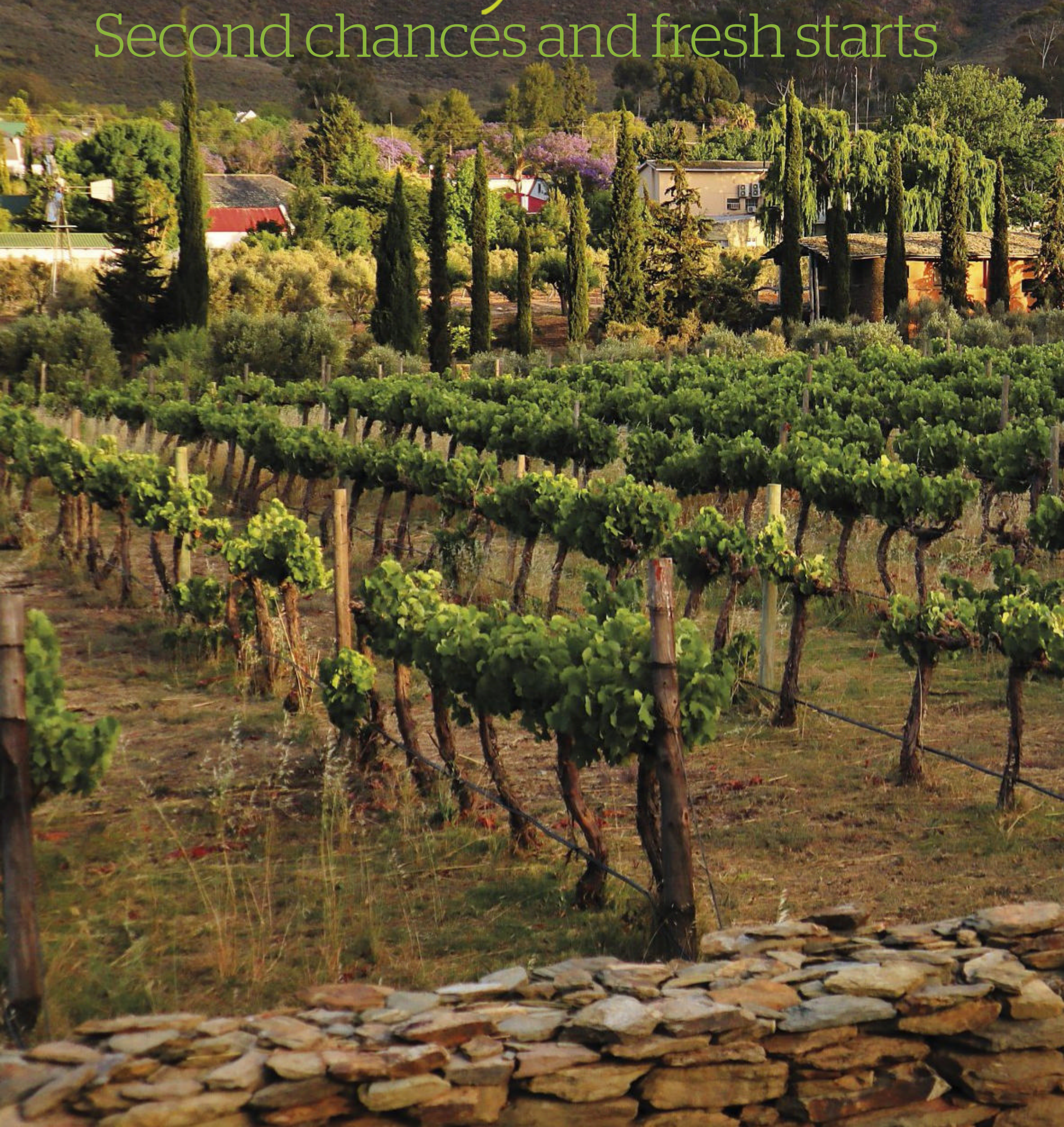
ABOVE Pieter is a fan of the late artist Vladimir Tretchikoff's work – *Miss Wong*, illuminated by a picture light, enjoys pride of place.

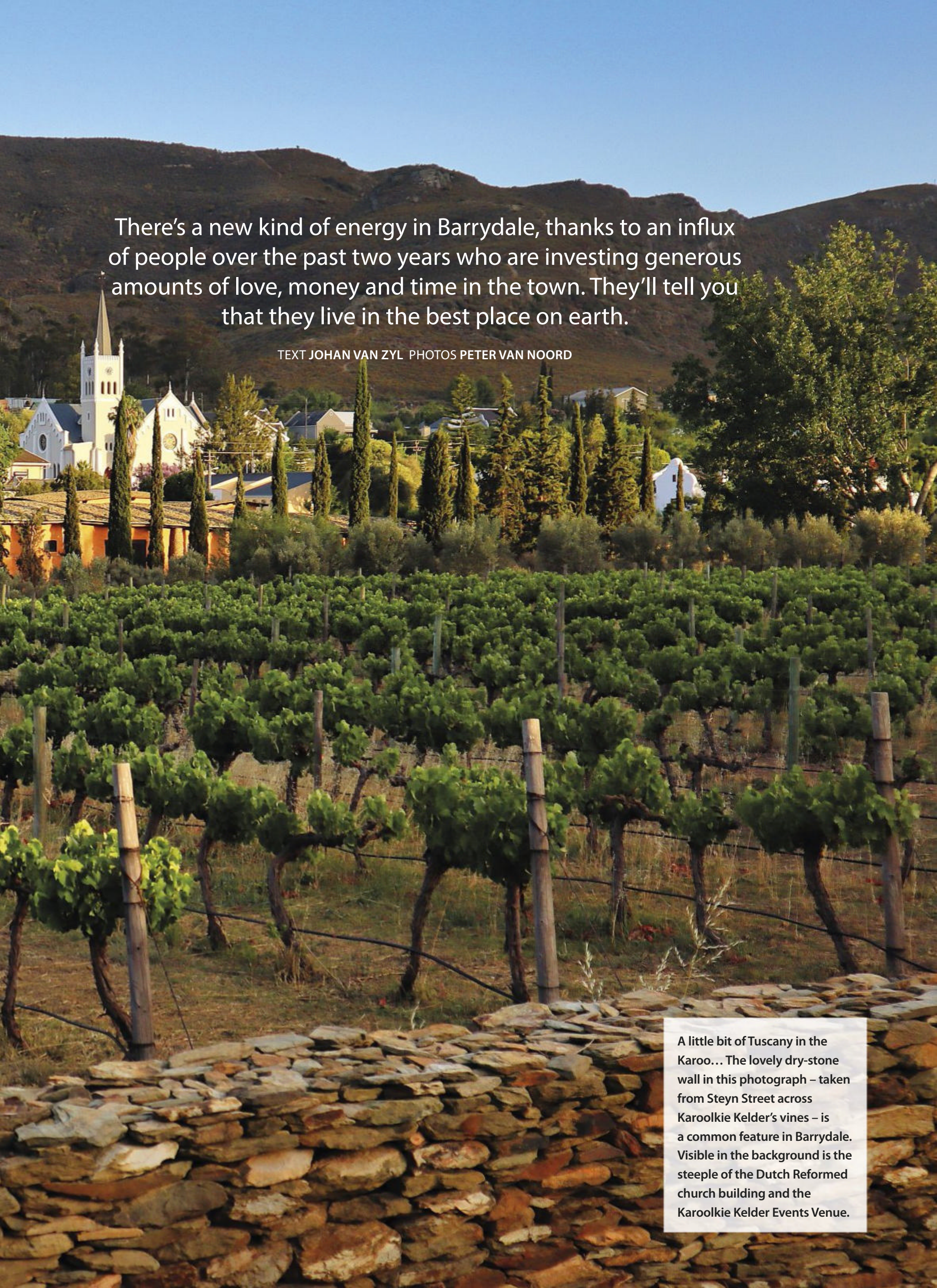
OPPOSITE The secret Green Room at Lord Carnarvon Guesthouse is special – this is where Pieter hides the gorgeous Henry the peacock.

MY TOWN

Barrydale

Second chances and fresh starts



A scenic landscape photograph of Barrydale, South Africa. In the foreground, a dry-stone wall made of irregular, flat stones runs across the bottom. Behind it is a vineyard with rows of grapevines supported by wooden posts and wires. In the middle ground, there are several tall, thin cypress trees and other greenery. In the background, a white church with a prominent steeple is visible, along with other buildings. The town is set against a backdrop of rolling hills under a clear blue sky.

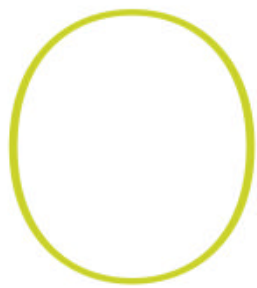
There's a new kind of energy in Barrydale, thanks to an influx of people over the past two years who are investing generous amounts of love, money and time in the town. They'll tell you that they live in the best place on earth.

TEXT JOHAN VAN ZYL PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD

A little bit of Tuscany in the Karoo... The lovely dry-stone wall in this photograph – taken from Steyn Street across Karoolkie Kelder's vines – is a common feature in Barrydale. Visible in the background is the steeple of the Dutch Reformed church building and the Karoolkie Kelder Events Venue.

MY TOWN

A view of Barrydale as you approach the town from Ladismith via the R62. Late afternoon, cool coastal air blows in through Tradouw Pass, causing clouds to form and providing some relief from the heat.



f all the towns along the famous R62 connecting Ashton in the Western Cape with Humansdorp in the

Eastern Cape, it's safe to say the residents of Barrydale's are the most eclectic (some would say quirky) collection of individuals you're likely to find.

For years, this small town, has been attracting interesting, talented, smart, kind, eccentric and sometimes just plain crazy people. You'll often hear the locals, even in Afrikaans, talking about the energy of the ley lines, its call, or healing vibes that drew them to Barrydale.

Others like to joke about the spaceship on Diesel & Crème's billboard next to the R62, a few kilometres before you drive into

town and find your way to this American-inspired diner.

"It's true, the people who live here are seriously off-kilter," says Charl Barry*, a cheerful music-obsessed former flight attendant. With his unruly hair, a litany of tats each telling their own story, and Floyd the dachshund on his lap, Charl himself has the look of someone who might have been the captain of a spaceship.

"This is alien landing ground," he says. "The alien ships come here to refuel, but then a few of the really crazy ones stay behind in town."

Some of those who heeded the call of the countryside do eventually leave again, including veteran journalist Max du Preez and Booker Prize winner Damon Galgut, who, when his mid-1990s novel *The Quarry* didn't sell, found himself broke and "stranded" in Barrydale.

After spending five fabulous, busy days in the town, you don't really want to label Barrydale residents as "alternative", "bohemian" or "hippies". Many who have chosen to follow a more unconventional path were once city dwellers caught in the rat race, running the middle-class treadmill like their lives depended on it. Until one day it dawned on them that there has to be another, better life – and they discovered Barrydale, of all places!

NEVER BEFORE IN *Platteland's* decade of existence have we come across so many miraculous stories in one place of how and why people came to settle there.

Adolf Potgieter, a former stockbroker from Johannesburg, who now farms with pears and pigs, makes the most divine prosciutto.



LEFT Terry de Vries is a yoga teacher, labyrinth facilitator, holistic healer, Camino guide and these day also the owner of Kamala House Karoo Retreat. Here she is, standing in front of the beautiful wings with all kinds of hidden symbols that muralist Quinton Faro (see page 47) painted for her. Terry moved to Barrydale from Stellenbosch, her hometown of many years, in 2018.

BELOW A group of friends engaged in a guided meditation walk in the beautiful rose quartz and slate labyrinth at Kamala House, which Stellenbosch architect Johann Slee redesigned.



Scottish electrical engineer Arran Bastable and his South African wife Michelle, who left London for Barrydale, are the owners of Barrydale Hand Weavers.

Former accountant Yvette Anderson was a landscape architect before she grew indigenous medicinal plants at a botanical retreat near Citrusdal for six years. These days, she's known as an ecological restorer. She and her partner, metaverse specialist Dale Imerman, are currently restoring a neglected olive orchard at Karoolkie using indigenous herbs. Yvette also has her own range of medicinal teas, Yamù Botanicals (f Yamu Botanicals). (We're featuring her and her holistic approach to restoring soil, plants and humans in a future issue.)

The indigenous American shaman Michelle Reid and her husband

Gordon Aeschliman, formerly from Hout Bay in Cape Town, now offer transformation retreats, sweat lodges, yoga and all manner of ceremonies in Barrydale under the banner of The Beauty Way (thebeautyway.co.za). They're involved in the community in many ways, and help families in Smitsville to cultivate organic food gardens.

Terry de Vries, who moved to Barrydale four years ago, says the town has always been in her blood. She is a former journalist who lived in Stellenbosch for many years and has worked as a yoga instructor, labyrinth facilitator and sound therapist. Her father, the late Mike de Vries, former rector of Stellenbosch University, grew up on a farm in the Barrydale area and matriculated here. She has since discovered that her great-grandparents were buried here. >



MY TOWN

Terry first came to Barrydale to build a labyrinth for a friend, and shortly thereafter bought a house with a large yoga studio. Before she knew it, she had also bought the erf with the rose-quartz labyrinth, and not long afterwards the house next door. Stellenbosch architect Johann Slee has since transformed this house into a luxury yoga retreat.

AS YOU MEET these “settlers”, it becomes clear how many of them think their adopted hometown is the most wonderful place on earth. One thing you can say about the people of Barrydale is that everyone here has been given a second – or even third or fifth – chance to undergo a kind of metamorphosis of the spirit, to be what they’ve always wanted to be and do what they’ve always wanted to do. And as long as you don’t belittle or disturb anyone else’s self-actualisation, the rest of the town will accept you as you are – warts, dreamcatchers, dagga joints and all.

Kenny Scheepers, a former oil trader and investment banker who now runs Metanoia Permaculture Farm and Distillery 16 km outside of town, is the perfect example, even though he is on the scientific and secular side of the spectrum. He purposely chose the name Metanoia – a change in one’s way of life – because it’s the main reason he and his wife Erna bought a farm with depleted soil in the

Tradouw Valley in 2015 and started farming according to renewable and permaculture principles.

Kenny grew up in a Calvinistic community in Mokopane (Potgietersrus) in Limpopo, where his father was the town dentist. He started growing vegetables as a child, but a process of greater awareness and awakening was kicked off after he left the country in 1995 to live and work in the UK, America and Switzerland.

“Permaculture, as I was introduced to it through the work of Bill Mollison and David Holmgren,

was part of this. I’ve always been interested in being self-sufficient. That’s why, whenever I could, I worked on permaculture farms in Europe, North America and South America, where people cultivate their own food. In Russia, for example, about 70% of the available food is cultivated by subsistence farmers, and in Italy and Portugal I saw how people can survive on small plots of land by adding value in the form of hams and other deli meats. Ultimately, smaller but diversified income streams are the only way of surviving on this scale.” >



ABOVE LEFT Kenny Scheepers, the owner of Metanoia Permaculture Farm and Distillery, currently sells two gins and a brandy – and there’s much more to come.

ABOVE RIGHT Kenny is also the backer of The Farm Deli, an organic food shop where Lariska de Luca sells locally sourced products and fresh produce.

RIGHT Yvette Anderson stands among some of the 37 indigenous plants that will over time restore the soil in a neglected olive grove on Karoolkie farm in the centre of Barrydale.





The key to their home

Pretoria-based fashion designer Gert van de Merwe (far left) learnt to love the Karoo when he regularly had to drive between Pretoria and Cape Town during the pandemic due to flight restrictions. During the winter of 2020, he and his husband Jaco Janse van Rensburg (left), a top hair stylist, and their Weimaraner Alexia started looking for a holiday home in the Karoo. Driving the R62, they discovered Barrydale and a neglected place in Van Riebeeck Street that was built in 1856 as a residential home with an annexe. They bought the property, put in a lot of work and time and 280   white Wedgewood paint, and finally, in December 2021, they could open a shop – Die Langhuis Kontrei Winkel – that is by far the most stylish in Barrydale.

The two of them and Barrydale were probably meant for each other, Gert says. He tells the story of a big antique key that he picked up on the West Coast years ago. "My mother and I were in the car when I noticed we had just passed a turn-off. I told her I wanted to see where that road led. We stopped somewhere and got out, and I saw the key lying in the veld." He tied a ribbon to it and hung it in his house in Pretoria, where it remained for many years.

When they travelled to Barrydale in December 2020 to stay at Die Langhuis for the first time, Jaco packed the key because he was under the impression it was a spare key for the house. To their surprise, the key to Die Langhuis and the key that Gert had picked up on the West Coast were identical!

The couple have now settled in Barrydale, and even though Gert still travels for work, they have lots of plans, like establishing a large vegetable garden and building guest cottages in their back yard.

LEFT In the mornings, a few Barrydale resident go for a swim in a lovely pool in Tradouw Pass – they include Rick Melvill of the Karoo Art Hotel, Mickey Mentz of News62 and Terry de Vries of Kamala House. You can do it too – if you book in at the hotel, you might get a lift with Rick in his classic blue Rolls-Royce.



MY TOWN

Kenny has always had a love of aromatic spirits and wanted to produce his own. Wanting to make his mind shift and lifestyle change a practical reality, he visited South Africa early in the new millennium to start looking around for farms for sale in fruit-producing areas. They wanted to cultivate their own fruit and vegetables, and produce their own meat, but also start a distillery that runs exclusively on solar power and gas, and using rainwater and mountain water.

During a visit to Barrydale, Kenny tasted some of Joseph Barry's world-class brandies and realised several types of export-quality fruit have been cultivated in the Tradouw Valley for decades – grapes, apricots, peaches and figs in summer, and apples, pears and oranges in autumn and winter. (Many farmers also do well with carrot and onion seeds.) The area is rich in aromatic and medicinal plants such as buchu, African wormwood (*Artemisia afra*) and confetti bush, which are perfect for spirits such as gin, absinthe and aquavit.

Farming operations on Metanoia are holistic and biodiverse. Here, you'll find a food forest, a vegetable garden, a worm farm, composting containers, and chickens and sheep that fertilise the soil as they're rotated among the fields where perennial cover crops are cultivated. The excess grain from the distillery is fed to the chickens, and the fruit pulp is turned into compost to enrich the soil. It's no wonder the Metanoia Klein Karoo Gin, which Kenny made to his own taste, won double-gold at the 2022 SA Craft Gin Awards.

In the US, Kenny also witnessed the immense financial benefits of a co-operation where the local Amish people could sell their produce. That's why he got involved as a financier when Lariska de Luca started The Farm Deli in Barrydale in September 2020 – because it was always hard to find good, healthy, fresh organic vegetables, fruit, eggs,



Sue Melvill, co-owner of the Karoo Art Hotel with her husband Rick, photographed in the hotel dining room with their dog Charlie. She is the “eye” behind the hotel’s new look after major renovations – they reopened their doors in March 2022.

meat, dairy and environmentally friendly products in the town. Metanoia's eggs, for example, are sold at the deli and to the local restaurants and hotel.

THE NEW OWNERS of the Karoo Art Hotel, Rick and Sue Melvill, are the kind of people who have always loved projects. “Especially if we fall head over heels in love with a concept, like a town hotel,” the stylish Sue says, steering us subtly through almost the entire building while sharing interesting tidbits.

The Melvills, who are partners in the luxury retro safari brand Melvill & Moon and own Unplugged Communications, used to own the legendary Prynnsberg Sandstone Mansion and Estate near Clocolan in the Free State, having lovingly restored it to its former glory. Three years ago, they bought “a derelict old guest house” in Kalk Bay, Cape Town, which Sue was planning on turning into a lodge, but then Covid-

19 struck and they decided it would become their home.

In March 2021, following a motorbike tour through the Tankwa, Rick slept over in the hotel in Barrydale and saw a notice that the property was to be sold at an auction, which he'd already missed. But the hotel was still available and Sue was ready for a new project. They started with the renovations in September 2021, and the hotel reopened its doors in March last year – still, as the name suggests, with beautiful works of art on display.

“It's an incredible town. Many people fall in love with it straight away when they come over that mountain and see it,” Rick says.

When they're in town, he joins other locals in the cold-water swimming tradition promoted by Wim Hof by going for an early-morning dip in a mountain pool in Tradouw Pass. “That starts your day off the right way.”

Rick describes Tradouw Pass as the lungs of Barrydale.



Just like Rick and Sue Melvill's luxury safari brand Melvill & Moon, there is something old-world and elegant about their new Karoo Art Hotel on the corner of Van Riebeeck and Laing streets.

In a nutshell

How far from economic hubs?

Barrydale is 245 km from Cape Town and 160 km from Mossel Bay, at the crossing of the R62 and the R324 over Tradouw Pass. The closest neighbouring towns on the other side of the pass are Suurbraak (36 km) and Swellendam (46 km), and along the R62, Montagu (62 km) and Ladismith (80 km).

Average rainfall In this semi-arid climate, the annual rainfall varies between 129 mm and 147 mm. It rains throughout the year, but mostly in the winter months of June and July.

Average temperature The official average summer temperature is 28°C, but in high summer, between December and February, the mercury rises as high as the upper 30s. In winter the average daytime temperature is 14°C, whereas the nighttime average is 6°C – but if there's frost, it can easily dip below freezing point.

Amenities Basic groceries are available from the OK Grocer in Van Riebeeck Street. The Farm Deli (f The Farm Deli – Barrydale @ barrydalefarmdeli

☎ 060 361 3229) is a one-stop shop for the best organic fruit and veg, meat, dairy and a wide variety of preserves and health products. Do yourself a favour and buy two jars of the Greek yoghurt or labneh. Irmgard and David Wright produce these using the milk of Awassi sheep, trading under the label All About Sheep (f All About Sheep ☎ 073 138 6720). It's divine. The townspeople are also ecstatic to have a proper butcher and deli again, at 5 Ladismith Way: Ranger & Sons Butcher & Deli (f Ranger & Sons Butcher and Deli ☎ 066 068 5054). At the internet café The Hub (@ ant21@iafrica.com ☎ 028 572 1277), opposite the OK Grocer, Anthony Chidrawi is happy to assist with stationery, printing, art and computer equipment, courier services, internet access, second-hand books and even coffee and light meals. Some of his art, including beautiful portraits, are on display and for sale in the shop.

Nearest hospitals, retirement homes and schools The town has schools, a clinic, a Hospice branch

and an optometrist, but there's no medical doctor, dentist, pharmacy or retirement home. The nearest decent state hospital is in Swellendam, and the nearest private hospital is Mediclinic in Worcester.

Nearest Woolies You'll have to trek the 140 km to the Mountain Mill Shopping Centre in Worcester.

Municipality Barrydale resorts under the Swellendam Municipality, which also includes places such as Suurbraak, Malgas, Infanta and Stormsvlei. Service delivery is good – in the past, this municipality has been named the best in the country. During our visit to Barrydale, the municipality imposed strict water regulations.

Find out more Visit 🖱 barrydale-info.co.za for information about things to do, businesses, restaurants and accommodation options in the area. To keep abreast of local news, concerts and festivals, visit Mickey Mentz's website News62 🖱 news62.co.za (and the quarterly newspaper of the same name, *News62*).

“After a blistering hot day, the hot Karoo air rises and sucks in the cool coastal air through the pass, bringing great relief from the heat.”

We experienced this natural phenomenon every day for five days, and heard the eerie cries of peacocks every now and then. Sometimes we heard the drone (and smelled the whiff) of the “honeysucker” that is still used to drain the town’s sewers.

And every day, more of the locals told us about other residents of the town: “You should talk to...” the local Khoisan chief, Peter Takelo (who was on his way to the riel-dancing competition in Cape Town); Oom Hannes Marthinus, Barrydale’s master builder of drystone walls; the industrious Quinton Faro, who painted all the impressive murals in town.

The people of Barrydale are *busy*! Or has the spaceship been back to fetch some of them?



This gang shows up at The Hub at 08:00 to enjoy coffee and a smoke. From left are Robert Squires, barista Reuben Hart (formerly known as Reuben the Screwman on Radio 702), Peter John, Ronnie Price of the well-known Ronnie’s Sex Shop, Anton van Vliet, owner Ant(hony) Chidrawi, and Ronnie’s wife PJ Price.

The price of property

Because Barrydale is relatively crime-free and compact, with little room for expansion, properties sell fast and demand exceeds supply. That’s also why there are few properties available for less than R2 million.

Below are three favourites currently on offer by Ruth Goodman of Dormehl Phalane Properties.

📍 dpgprop.co.za (type “Barrydale” into the search bar) ☎ 081 777 4185



R2,459 million

This restored 200 m² cottage, built in 1898 as a “*nagmaalhuisie*”, offers two large living areas, a kitchen, three bedrooms, a bathroom, a study, a garage and two carports, as well as air-conditioning, blinds and an alarm system.



R3 million

This typical Karoo house on a 3 000 m² plot has full business rights. It comprises several sections: a spacious gallery and/or restaurant area with two toilets on the ground floor, and a large, open office space and balcony on the top floor; four converted horse stables that now serve as en-suite bedrooms behind the main building; a large outside braai area; and a water-smart garden.



R2,695 million

This one is a gardener’s dream. The 1 621 m² property has a newly built 135 m² cottage with two en-suite bedrooms, a kitchen and scullery, and an open-plan living area. There’s also a large dam with a pump, a splash pool, a succulent garden and a rose garden, a stone cottage for guests (or a workshop or studio) and four large greenhouse tunnels.

Meet the people

Charl Barry*

Rock music and movie addict

On 2 January 1980, after his compulsory two years as a conscript in the army, Charl Barry put a plan in motion to fulfil a big dream: He wanted to see the British rock band Led Zeppelin live, and the only way he could think of was to get a job as a flight attendant at South African Airways.

In the nearly 40 years that followed, Charl “saw the whole world for free”, attended at least 450 international rock concerts (including Led Zeppelin’s last show in 1980), met many of his rock heroes – and became addicted to booze, cocaine and tattoos. There’s a story, which may or may not be true, that Charl was such a wild party animal that The Rolling Stones’ management reckoned he shouldn’t accompany the band on a chartered flight because he’d be a bad influence.

Charl was known for his adventurous spirit. At one stage, he saw most of Europe by hitchhiking with a large sign in his hand that read “ANYWHERE”. This rebellious streak started when Charl was a youngster in McGregor, where his parents owned the hotel. In 1973, when he was 13 years old and Pink Floyd had just released *The Dark Side of the Moon*, he secretly hitchhiked to Robertson, where he caught a freight train to Worcester to buy the album at Musica.

Asked about the truth of the matter, Charl just grins. All he’ll say is, “Look, I was a serious alcoholic who drank like a fish and was often terribly drunk at 6 am. I snorted thousands of rands’ worth of cocaine up my nostrils and wasted almost all my money on drugs. But in between, I also bought some art by big names. I went to rehab three times and even tried implants, but I didn’t want to stop.”

Then, 21 years ago – “on 7 July 2001; I remember because it was the day of the running of the bulls” – he woke up drunk and high, lying in his own vomit, and his wife asked him, “Do you really want your son to see you like this?”



In the inset below, Charl – then a flight attendant – sits between Keith Richards (left) and Ronnie Wood of The Rolling Stones.

That was the moment Charl decided it was now or never, because apart from his health, he simply couldn’t afford his drug habit anymore.

“That evening, we had a long flight to Miami and when I briefed the crew beforehand, I announced I’d quit drinking that day. They laughed it off – I’d said it so many times before – but those people stood by me, and I’ve never touched alcohol or cocaine since.”

Since then, Charl has spent a third of his income on music, memorabilia and himself, sent a third home to his family, and saved the last third towards a home and his retirement. In October 2018, Charl and his dog Floyd retired to Barrydale, where they moved into a restored packing shed where they used to dry apricots and store horse fodder on the top floor.

Charl says he is officially the happiest man in Barrydale. He basically lives in a private rock museum, surrounded by signed memorabilia and thousands of CDs and rare collectors’ LPs by the likes of The Rolling Stones and Pink Floyd. He even owns an album by Elvis and Janis Martin, which Elvis’s management had

withdrawn from sale because Janis’s name appears above Elvis’s on the cover.

“I’ve thrown out a whole bunch of LPs, like the Beatles stuff they printed way too many of, so it’s worthless. Now I really just collect psychedelia from between 1965 and 1975, and hard rock. And the nicest feather in my cap is the young people under 21 who now consult me for my knowledge of music.”

He’s also the person who gets to choose the vintage movie shown every Friday night in the Karoo Art Hotel’s Belanti Bioscope, and he has presented blues shows for Bush Radio. But mostly he and Floyd are content to be the happiest residents.

• Watch Green Renaissance’s short film about Charl and Floyd and their life in Barrydale on YouTube – simply search for “Green Renaissance Charl Barry”.

** We were deeply saddened to learn that Charl passed away on 7 February – on the morning we were preparing to send this issue of the magazine to the printer. Barrydale has truly lost a character – and its last Barry. Our condolences to his family, friends and Floyd. Eds >*

Meet the people

Meyer and Beate Joubert

Owners: Joubert-Tradauw Private Cellar and R62 Deli Alfresco

"Literally everything has changed in Barrydale," says Meyer Joubert, who was born and grew up here, when you ask him when and why the influx of "alternative thinkers" to Barrydale started. "Are you talking about the regular crazies or the super crazies?" he quips as his wife Beate sets down one of her acclaimed platters on the table.

"I think it's the combination of good soil and fresh water and a little culture that has always enticed interesting people. About 30 years ago there were one or two guest houses in town, and now there's a whole bunch of places in the area where you might pay up to R4000 a night.

"But no matter how cosmopolitan the town has become, there's still something unpretentious and authentic about it. Some people call it a lush little Tuscan oasis. Because of the valley's microclimate, we harvest later in the season than other regions do – there have been times when we picked our last Chardonnay grapes as late as May."

After Beate and Meyer lived and worked overseas from 1992 to



1995 – she initially in Europe and he in California's Napa Valley for two consecutive harvests – they returned to the Meyer family farm. They decided to start making good wine on a small scale, "maybe with some bread and meat to serve with it, but it was really hard at first and we soon realised there wasn't really enough water, money or foot traffic on the farm. This isn't Stellenbosch or Ceres or Grabouw – you'll notice there aren't many wealthy farmers here."

"It's difficult when you have children to be so far from everything," Beate

adds. "The people who do labels, corks, bottles and marketing are all far from here. You rarely get the chance to attend events, and here you are in the bundu and you're crazy enough to think you can build a business here."

Even though theirs is still mainly a fruit farm with vineyards, the Jouberts offer accommodation on their farm, as well as the **Unplugged 62 musical festival** from 17 to 21 March (tickets for sale at Quicket).

"You have to try everything – after all, it's Barrydale," they say.

Arran Bastable

Co-owner: Barrydale Hand Weavers

In August 2019, Arran, a Scotsman, and his South African wife Michelle became the new owners of Barrydale Hand Weavers, a business that Carol Morris started in 2007. Last year, they produced nearly 1 700 m of fabric for the movie *The Woman King*, starring Viola Davis, before the weavery and shop relocated to the premises of the Joseph Barry Distillery.

Originally, Arran had been offered a 12-month contract to work in South Africa as an engineer, but it fell through just two weeks before they were set to depart the UK. So they decided to bring the family – they have three young children – to Barrydale in the meantime, as Michelle's parents own property here. After about 200 unsuccessful job applications, the couple started to look for a business to buy.

"I've always loved the do-it-yourself attitude South Africans have. It's very liberating to do something for yourself, because you know the government isn't going to do it for you. Everything in the UK is so stringently regulated that few people can afford to start their own business." Also, Arran adds, their intention was to scale down and live at a slower pace. And that's exactly what they're doing.





Serin Booyesen and Rensie Britz

Housekeepers at Kamala House Karoo Retreat

The luxurious Kamala House, which was redesigned by Stellenbosch architect Johann Slee (and where *Platteland* stayed during our visit to Barrydale), is kept spotless by Serin Booyesen, a cousin of Kamala's gardener Dan Daniels, and Rensie Britz.

Serin, who was born and grew up in Barrydale, has two sons, Tyron (21) and Santino (12). She is a member of the local Uniting Reformed Church, enjoys reading detective stories and romance novels, and has worked at the hotel and several Barrydale restaurants in various positions over the years – including as waitress, cook and cleaner.

"Everything here happens at a slower pace than in Cape Town, where I lived for a while," she says. "And although Barrydale and Smitsville also have their dark sides, you can still let your child play outside safely, because you know the neighbours will keep an eye on them. I only wish there were more employment and leisure opportunities to keep the young people and children out of trouble."

Rensie (short for Marencia) hails from De Doorns but has been living in Barrydale for 30 years and is raising her two sons, Cardy-leigh (10) and Mi-kyle (6), here. She's a member of the local Apostolic Church and in the evenings she is part of the kitchen team at Mez Karoo Kitchen, where Serin also used to work.

"Things have changed a lot over the years," Rensie says. "There's a lot more new people, and they bring with them more job opportunities, but it's still a quiet, peaceful town. What I enjoy most is walking the streets on a Sunday and seeing all the restaurants full – everyone gets their slice of business."

Apart from unemployment, housing in Smitsville is another major problem. "They haven't even built 100 homes here yet, but supposedly there are 800 people on the waiting list, and squatter camps are popping up everywhere."

Is there anything she misses? She laughs. "A large mall like in Swellendam! It's not as if I'm a big shopper, but, you know, it costs R120 to take the taxi to Swellendam and back, and most people simply cannot afford it."



Dan Daniels and Herman Braaf

Gardeners at Kamala House

Dan Daniels was born on a farm near Barrydale. He worked on the farm Lemoenshoek, owned by Peter and Nola Frazer, for 22 years, where he pruned fruit trees and helped to raise monkeys and baboons at the wildlife rehabilitation centre the couple used to run. In 1998, the Frazers built a labyrinth on their farm.

Dan just smiles at the fact that he's once again working at a place with a labyrinth. "Barrydale is a peaceful town," he says. "There are a few tsotsis in Smitsville, but I don't pay them any mind, and the winters are perhaps a little cold for my taste, but I don't have any other complaints. The best is still weekends at my house when my cousin and I play guitar."

His colleague Herman Braaf was born in Swellendam but attended a school in Barrydale. He has always had a love of drama, and after doing a course at the Chrysalis Academy he became involved in holiday programmes offered by a local non-profit for kids in disadvantaged communities.

Herman started working at Kamala House last winter after helping with a paint job. "Gardening is something new for me," he says. "If you live in a neighbourhood where you always have people around you, the silence of a garden can come as quite a surprise. I'm grateful, because I've always enjoyed silence more than noise." >

Meet the people

Zane Heart

Creative scientist

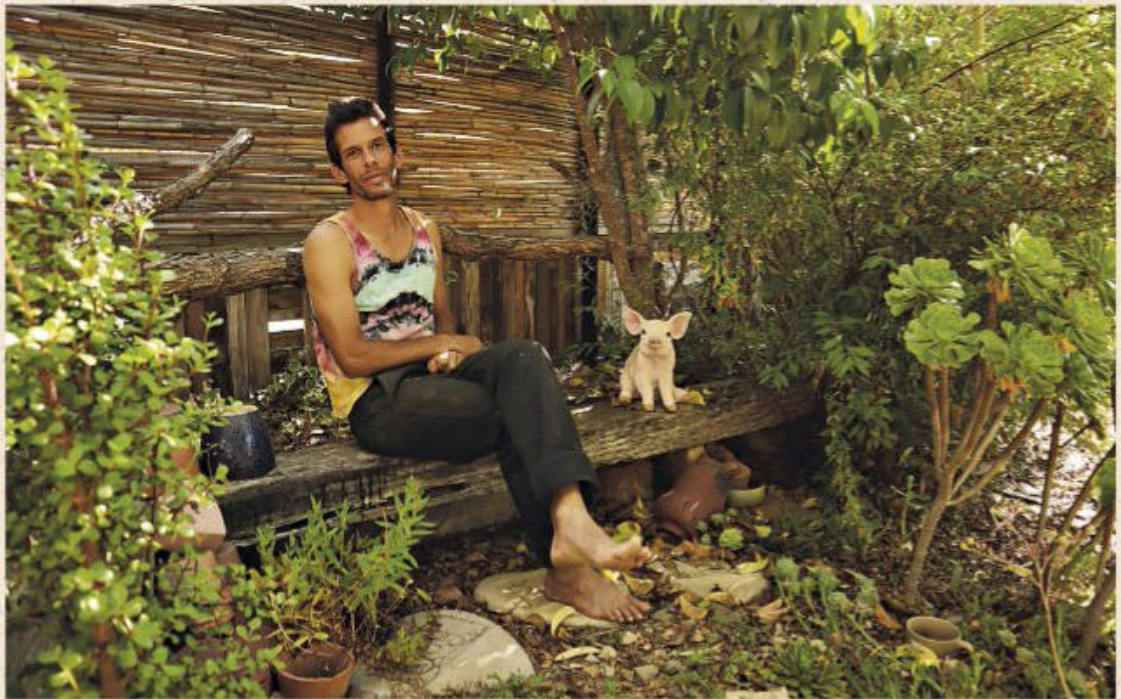
Platteland first noticed Zane's woodwork and art – including vegetable boxes made of reclaimed wood, an Indian daybed and a fireplace – at Kamala House. His work is so creative and unique that calling him a carpenter would be off the mark.

Zane laughs and nods, saying it's been a problem his whole life. "I really wanted to be a painter, but the art world is way too angry and pretentious for me. These days, I prefer the term creative scientist, because creativity is about problem-solving. And I'm cheap, because if I make you something, you're getting three for the price of one: the designer, the foreman and the artisan."

Zane, originally from Gauteng, arrived in Barrydale six years ago, after living in Plettenberg Bay for 14 years.

"Barrydale is a lovely but very intense place. You can't escape that easily or quickly – that's why some of them start drinking copiously or smoking dagga."

Apart from Zane's lovely vegetable and herb garden, which he calls his

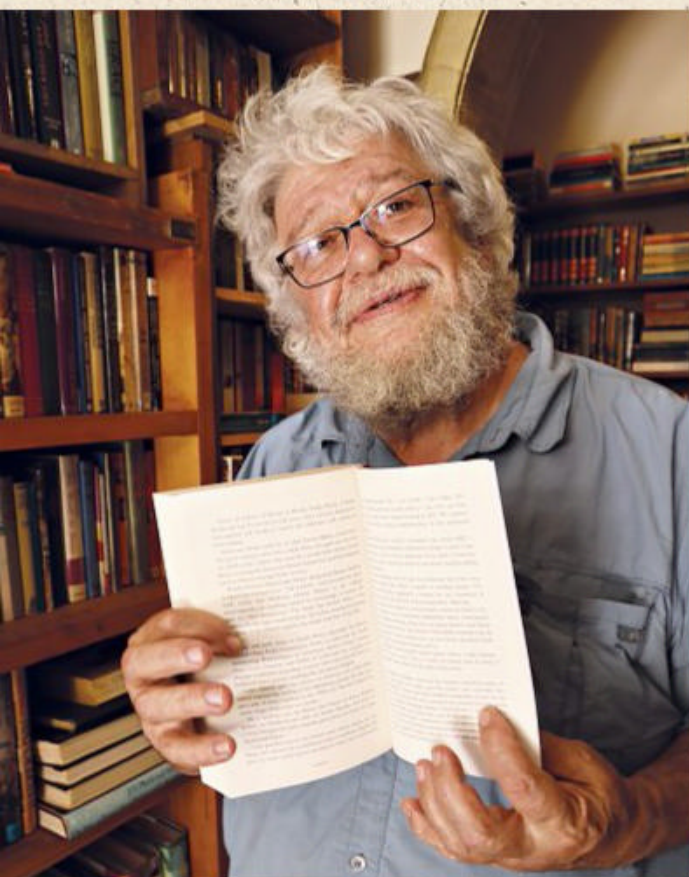


pharmacy, we were deeply impressed with the composting project he started during lockdown. He sells large bags of compost – double the normal size – for R100 each, and everything is made right outside their home in a large "cake", according to the hot composting method. He uses leaves, grass, twigs and manure brought to him by "homeless gatherers" and for which he pays R10 a bag. The price has been carefully

calculated so that he doesn't make a profit, but he does get free compost out of the deal.

"I never liked the Karoo and never would have come here," Zane tells us as he pours some of the herbal tea he's just brewed with rosemary, catnip, yarrow, feverfew, rose geranium, lemon geranium, marjoram and fennel seeds.

"But then Barrydale became a kind of medicine to me in a way. More tea?"



Anton de Villiers

Artist, photographer, and collector and trader of books

Anton, an avid photographer, once owned a video and DVD rental shop in Muizenberg, Cape Town, "but people never brought the stuff back". And that's why he's been living in Barrydale for the past 20 years.

He is known as the owner of House of Books, which has been doing business in a beautiful old house at 37 Van Riebeeck Street for the past 15 years. His incredible collection of second-hand and new books fills every room to the rafters.

He sometimes finds himself in a Catch-22: on the one hand, he's a salesman who wants to sell books; on the other, he's a book collector who often refuses to let an item go because he knows what it's worth and that he'll probably never find another. It's led to more than one skirmish with a would-be customer.

"You also have to be careful not to underestimate your customers' knowledge. I consider myself a pseudo-expert on the Anglo-Boer War. So one day, when this short, polite man walked in here, not saying much, I started rambling a bunch of nonsense about what this or that writer had had to say about the war. He let me talk, and then he said, 'Oh, I see you have three of my books here'. Turns out he's a highly qualified expert on the war who has written several South African history books."

Asked what keeps him in Barrydale, Anton laughs. "I honestly don't know why I'm still here, because it's too hot in summer and there are too many mosquitoes, and in winter you feel like you're freezing to death."



Quinton Faro

Artist and signwriter

Quinton, who has always lived in Barrydale, is the artist behind the beautiful murals and signs that you see at businesses in Barrydale and neighbouring towns. Here, he stands in front of one of his murals on a wall of Karoo Daisy Restaurant on the R62.

Quinton says he has always enjoyed drawing, but it was only after high school, when he worked with his father in the construction industry, that he discovered his talent for looking at a picture and then, in his mind's eye, to scale it up and project it on a wall. >

Arthur and Louise Pharo

Owners of Diesel & Crème (together with their son Dean)

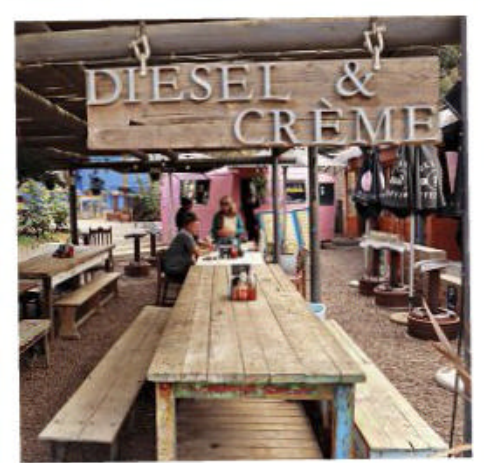
Arthur, who's a builder, and Louise, who worked for a bank for many years, first zipped through Barrydale on their Harley-Davidsons before they bought a house here in 2011.

Arthur describes himself as the "original picker" (the American term for antiques and memorabilia hunters). He has amassed quite the collection on their many road trips. He had it all couriered to Barrydale with the idea of building an American diner.

Nowadays, Diesel & Crème, which opened in 2014, is probably the town's best-known landmark. Their son Dean manages the day-to-day, and Louise helps with the bookkeeping. The couple now have more time to travel and get involved in charity work, like the soup kitchen they operated from the restaurant during lockdown.

"Barrydale is like the sieve of life for everything that ends up here," Arthur says. "Many interesting people stop by – sometimes terrible ruffians too – but most of them luckily get back on the spaceship after landing here."

Dean Pharo (right), co-owner of Diesel & Crème, with two trusted employees, Raynard de Wet and Angela Phiri.





Diesel & Crème

Eat, drink and be merry!

HIKE, EXPLORE AND SHOP Surrender to the mountains (and mountain water)

Barrydale is situated in the narrow, fertile Tradouw Valley in the foothills of the Langeberg at the northern end of Tradouw Pass. The latter is one of *Platteland's* favourite mountain passes; it offers pretty picnic spots, pools for swimming and a clearly marked public tap where you're welcome to fill containers with clean mountain water. (Sadly, some people litter everywhere they go...)

Alternatively, book a cold-water swim in a mountain pool with adventurous locals such as Rick Melvill of the Karoo Art Hotel; Mickey Mentz, who compiles the town's newsletter and quarterly newspaper; or yoga instructor, labyrinth facilitator and sound therapist Terry de Vries. Make your reservation at the hotel – they'll even take your coffee order and send it along in flasks. And if Rick is in town, you'll be driven in his 1980-model Rolls-Royce named *Sputnik*.

There are several hiking trails in the area. Try the one that starts in town and ends at a mountain pool and waterfall (best take along enough drinking water – it's quite the hike). You'll see numerous protea, erica and restio species along the way.

Visit the weavers

It's a privilege and a pleasure to watch the talented staff at **Barrydale Hand Weavers** weave their magic. (Visit our Facebook page to see a video clip.

f Platteland) Once you realise how much skill, time and, most importantly, rhythm it takes to weave cloth with the locally produced cotton, you'd be happy to pay the price for their towels, table linen, blankets, throws, scarves and carpets. Visit the shop and weavery every weekday from 08:00 to 17:00, and until 16:00 on a Saturday and 15:00 on a Sunday. It's located at the entrance to the town, at Joseph Barry Distillery. barrydaleweavers.co.za ☎ 028 572 1012

Browse local shops

One of the first things the locals ask you is whether you've been to their "grand new gift shop". They're referring to **Die Langhuis** in Van Riebeeck Street, where fashion designer Gert van de Merwe stocks all kinds of pretty and fragrant items for the home (scatter cushions, candles, cutlery, crockery and more), as well as preserves and sweet treats, and a limited range of women's apparel. His husband Jaco's hair salon is next door. They recently extended the shop by adding an extra room

and a porch, and there are all kinds of exciting plans in the pipeline. **f** Die Langhuis Barrydale ☎ 082 450 0873

The **Magpie Art Collective** garnered international attention when former US presidential couple the Obamas bought one of its recycled chandeliers for the White House. Shane Petzer has since passed away, but Scott Hart and Tielman de Villiers are still involved in the local art community, and there is always something new to see in their gallery and workshop in Van Riebeeck Street, diagonally across from the hotel. **f** Magpie ☎ 082 939 5345

Lovers of art and antiques should visit the beautifully renovated **Die Ou Kerk**, where a large variety of wares are on offer at affordable prices. Visit from Monday to Friday, 10:30 to 15:00, and Saturday and Sunday, 10:00 to 15:00.

f Die Ou Kerk, Môreson, Barrydale ☎ 076 281 1028

About 70% of the crafts and jewellery Liske Yara Forest sells at **Hearts on Main** is made by local artists. She and her mother, Naki Janse van Rensburg, also revamp second-hand clothing, and there's all kinds of esoteric paraphernalia on sale. They've just taken over another venue around the corner (in an alley next to Absa) and have plans to start a coffee shop and



Surellen de Kock
of Barrydale
Hand Weavers



Michelle Berry of
Mez Karoo Kitchen



Die Langhuis

a small nursery. [f](#) Hearts - on Main
☎ 083 460 3509 ☎ 061 389 0722

If you're a fan of books, CDs and DVDs, set aside some time to visit **House of Books** at 37 Van Riebeeck Street. If possible, call ahead. [✉ mcgrudsters@gmail.com](mailto:mcgrudsters@gmail.com) ☎ 028 572 1024

Do a guided labyrinth walk

Platteland #21 (Summer 2018/'19) included a feature on labyrinths in which we mentioned the beautiful labyrinth of stone and rose quartz at Terry de Vries's **Kamala House Karoo Retreat**, where you can also do yoga and sound therapy. Terry offers guided labyrinth walks by appointment. It's a meditative walk to your inner feelings and can help rid you of stress and trauma, or offer better focus and ignite creativity. [👉 kamalakaroo.com](http://kamalakaroo.com) [✉ info@kamalakaroo.com](mailto:info@kamalakaroo.com) ☎ 082 442 5623

EAT OUT

Barrydale has an eatery for every palate and budget, and most line the R62 to tempt passing travellers. *Platteland* managed to get around to each and every one, so here are our favourites and the places we know because we've eaten there before.

The most surprising restaurant with

a super interesting menu is **Mez Karoo Kitchen** at 24 Van Riebeeck Street. The first good sign is a short yet varied list of "world cuisine" items on the blackboard that changes daily. Furthermore, Michelle Berry takes her cue from the seasons and what's available locally (or in the garden). Her approach can be described as a fusion of Mediterranean, Greek, Middle-Eastern and traditional Karoo cuisine. (The rosemary-and-fennel bread for the table and the service under the management of her son Kyle were among the highlights.) [✉ mezberry246@gmail.com](mailto:mezberry246@gmail.com) ☎ 082 077 5980

If you're in the mood for a lazy afternoon with good wine and the Klein Karoo served up in tapas form, book a table to experience one of the bounteous platters – a gorgeously flavoursome lucky packet of seasonal fruit and veg, preserves, charcuterie, cheese and local bread – served by home cook and cookbook writer Beate Joubert. You'll find her at the **R62 Deli Alfresco** on their fruit and wine farm Joubert-Tradauw. Booking is essential. [👉 joubert-tradauw.com](http://joubert-tradauw.com) ☎ 082 304 9000 – SMS or WhatsApp only)

Our breakfast on the back porch of the **Karoo Art Hotel** in Van Riebeeck Street was phenomenal – it's been ages since we've seen such wholesome deep-

orange yolks as those of the eggs laid by Erna and Kenny Scheepers' chickens. During *Platteland's* visit, the hotel had quite a few separate, exhaustive à la carte menus on offer: for breakfast (07:30–11:00), deli lunches on weekdays (12:00–15:00), lunch over weekends (the same hours), and dinner. Willie Smit, the hotel's new chef, is currently reworking the menus to include more vegetarian and vegan options. [👉 karooarthotel.co.za](http://karooarthotel.co.za) [✉ reservations@karooarthotel.co.za](mailto:reservations@karooarthotel.co.za) ☎ 066 189 7475

On the left as you enter town along the main thoroughfare from Montagu, you'll find the American-style diner **Diesel & Crème** ([f](#) Diesel & Crème [i](#) dieselandcreme ☎ 028 572 1008). It offers the most devilishly delicious milkshakes, as well as enticing options for breakfast and lunch.

Then you get the farm stall restaurant **The Country Pumpkin** (☎ 028 572 1019), which has freshly baked bread, pastries, roosterkoek and pancakes; **Camel Horse Café** ([f](#) Camel Horse Café ☎ 074 180 7241) with its bakery, pantry shop and day restaurant that offers "world comfort food"; former photographer Ryno's **The Maker's Brew** ([👉 the-makers-craft-brewery.business.site](#) ☎ 083 626 6121), which has excellent sourdough pizza and craft beer on the menu (and sells >

MY TOWN

gorgeous ceramics by Ryno's wife Helen Vaughan); and **Karoo Daisy** (karoodaisy.co.za 📞 084 556 9700) with its impressive murals by Quinton Faro (see page 47) – which has things like burgers, pizzas, pies, quiches and toasted sandwiches on the menu. Regrettably, we didn't get a chance to visit the coffee shop **Blue Cow** (bluecowbarrydale.com 📞 067 971 6773) on the corner of Van Collier and De Villiers streets (opposite Barrydale High School). The food and pastries get rave reviews from the locals and on Tripadvisor.

BARRYDALE IN A BOTTLE

Several world-class alcoholic beverages are produced in the Barrydale area. Since its earliest days, the town has been synonymous with good brandy, and you'll have to search far and wide to beat what has been produced since 1941 at **Joseph Barry Distillery** (josephbarry.co.za capebrandy.org 📞 028 572 1012 📞 021 859 2517). The brandy is distilled twice in copper stills using the Cognac method and then aged in French oak barrels. Two

of the distillery's Cape brandies won trophies at the 2022 Michelangelo International Wine & Spirit Awards. Book a Cape Brandy Experience tasting (with or without a chocolate pairing) and a distillery tour at the tasting room right at the entrance to town. Afterwards, visit Barrydale Hand Weavers next door.

Wine lovers who have not yet been introduced to the boutique wines by Meyer Joubert at **Joubert-Tradauw** (joubert-tradauw.com 📞 071 656 1230) can rectify that with a tasting at the cellar, which is open from Monday to Saturday, 09:00 to 17:00. It's better to book – if you're lucky, you'll get to chat to Meyer himself, who is happy to share his passion for grapes and wine, and will tell you all about the soil, the history and the wonderful microclimate of the Tradouw Valley.

Gin and brandy lovers – and soon there will also be whisky, grappa, rum and eau de vie to taste and buy – will be amazed by the state-of-the-art distillery Kenny Scheepers built on the permaculture farm **Metanoia** (metanoiadistillery.co.za 📧 kenny@metanoiadistillery.co.za 📞 071 641 4869), about 16 km from

town – and the whole shebang is powered by the sun and gas.

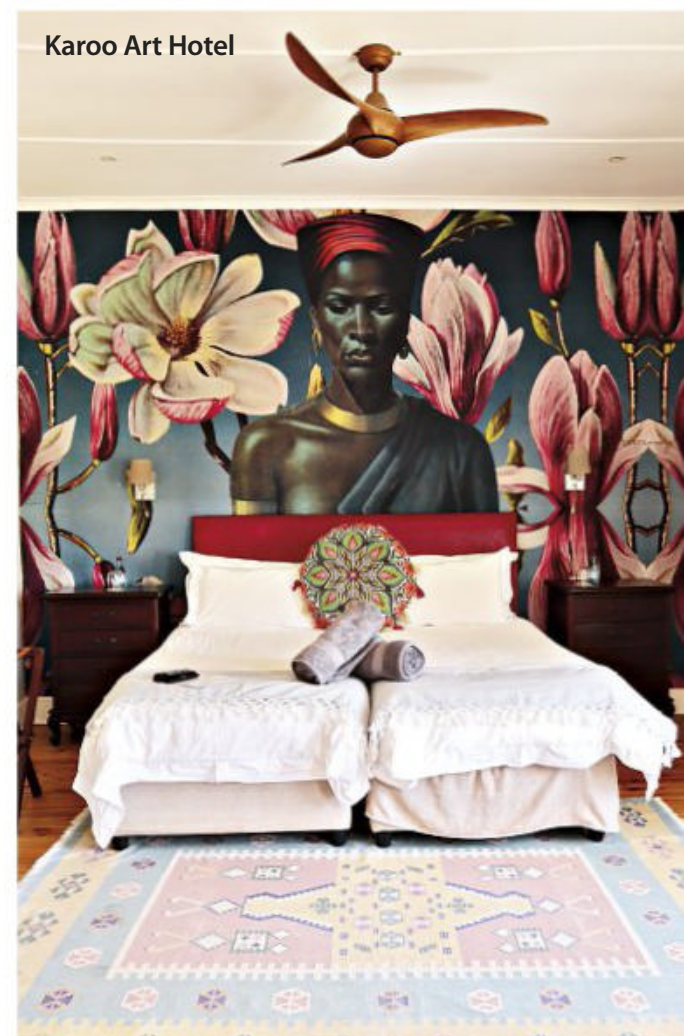
If craft beer is your thing, try the four beers – the refreshing Blonde, the slightly darker Amber, the spicy Saison and the dark Porter – at **The Maker's Brew** (the-makers-craft-brewery.business.site 📞 083 626 6121) on the R62. (Try their sourdough pizzas too.)

STAY OVER

Take your pick from overnight and holiday accommodation options in and around Barrydale – most are listed on [booking.com](https://www.booking.com), [travelground.co.za](https://www.travelground.co.za), [airbnb.com](https://www.airbnb.com) and [safarinow.com](https://www.safarinow.com).

The eclectic Karoo Art Hotel (karooarthotel.co.za 📧 reservations@karooarthotel.co.za 📞 066 189 7475), which reopened its doors in March last year after a major renovation and redecoration, offers beautiful rooms, each with its own theme.

Platteland stayed at Kamala House Karoo Retreat (kamalakaroo.com 📧 info@kamalakaroo.com 📞 082 442 5623) in Bain Street, which is normally only available to those attending a retreat. **P**





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FARM STAY

Swallowed up by the Karoo

On the farm Snyderskloof near Matjiesfontein it feels as though you are in the middle of nowhere – and that's exactly where you should be if you want to get off the digital hamster wheel.

TEXT AND PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD





The scenery from the Snyderskloof cottage changes constantly. People say the night sky is something to behold, but during our stay it was overcast the entire time, and the weather brought big clouds and rain. Once, we got 63 mm of rain in 3 hours... in December!

FARM STAY

Standing next to the pool (pictured on the previous two pages) and turning your back to the view, this is what you see: the lovely stone cottage, a windmill, pepper trees and krantz aloes.



Where do you go to recharge your batteries if you are feeling utterly exhausted after a year like 2022 (and its charming brothers 2021 and 2020)? These three scoundrels brought us years of darkness and sticky fingers, deception and scheming – let’s not even get started on incompetence and laziness. The interest rate and fuel prices are only going one way – upwards – and the economy limps in the opposite direction, downhill, ever more feeble.

Sometimes it seems as though the bad guys are getting the upper hand. And who could forget the worldwide grief the pandemic unleashed?

What you need is a place as far away as possible from every litter bug, and from “I know my rights” Tom, Dick and Harriet with his or her brand of noise. Free-flow exhaust systems with a *doef-doef-doef* mixed in that causes all that lives and breathes, as well as window panes, to shudder: ’70s music. R&B. ’80s music. Rap. Gospel. (*Thank the stars we have been spared the mad scene from Lucia di Lammermoor thus far.* – Eds) Quad bikes and other buzzers. Boom boxes. Cussing. Cursing. Fighting. Bickering...

IN THIS CONDITION you should escape to a place far from other people. A place like Snyderskloof, a working sheep farm 25 km north-west of Matjiesfontein, as the crow flies. But you need to make an effort to get there: First you have to face raving mad truck drivers on the N1, then you turn off at Matjiesfontein. Almost immediately, you take another left, onto a passable gravel road, and then you drive for 15 km, until you see the Snyderskloof sign. Open the gate (and shut it again, as a good guest should), and then tackle the final 9 km, about an hour’s drive. On this stretch, the designated gate opener won’t be able to sit back and relax. In places the track turns



LEFT The stoep room, where you can lie on your back to read or take a snooze, and braai in the evenings. If it gets chilly, just grab a blanket from the basket.

BELOW Just north of Matjiesfontein, you turn off onto the Keurkloof gravel road, and 15,6 km father you'll see the Snyderskloof sign on your right. Then it's another 9 km, across three farms – and you have to leave every gate the way you found it, either open or closed.



nasty; you are warned in advance, especially after rain. The owners, Jaco and Emmarie Terblanche from Durbanville, recommend that you travel in a vehicle with higher-than-average ground clearance, “although small sedans have made it before”.

The reward is immense when the small kloof opens up ahead of you and the pretty stone cottage comes into view. The yard, fenced to keep out sheep, is neatly raked. Low branches of pepper trees sway in the wind. There are krantz aloes around the house, and beyond the swimming pool a clutch of cannas – but other than that your garden is the gold-and-green glow of the Karoo veld after rain, with only the

shadow of a hasty cloud scurrying over the rocky ridges every now and then for some variety.

There's no need to concern yourself with load-shedding – because there is no electricity. One bar of cellphone reception is more or less the norm; two almost a miracle – and it lasts just long enough at least to allow you to download your Wordle of the day.

Wi-Fi? None, Ms Influencer.

Yet this house offers all you need: a large stoep with a dining table, and a plunge pool out front. And

beyond the water the Karoo unfolds dramatically in front of you. Would it rain even more tonight?

In the two bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen you'll find bed linen, towels, candles, oil lamps, matches, a pair of binoculars... even a cupboard full of board games. And a gas fridge, crockery, cutlery, pots, pans and serving dishes. Indoor and outdoor braai areas. Namibian hardwood, ordered ahead by the bag (R120 for 20kg) awaits you on your arrival. There is a shower with a gas geyser and, for your convenience, >

“There's no need to concern yourself with load-shedding – because there is no electricity.”

FARM STAY



When you arrive, park underneath the pepper tree behind the cottage and forget about the outside world for the rest of your stay. The Karoo vegetation was green when we were there, and twice we heard the river babbling – an unusual occurrence in this arid region. Go for walks in nearly any direction and you'll discover vantage points with uninterrupted views to the horizon.

eco-friendly shampoo, conditioner and body wash. The water comes from a borehole, and guests are warned that it has a “distinct farm taste”. Delicious.

All you need to bring along, according to the information sheet, are your food, drink and clothing. (Oh, you might as well leave your clothes behind and just pack a swimsuit and a kikoi or kimono.) And no, there is no need to pick up any keys; you're all on your own.

WHEN THE TERBLANCHES bought the farm in 2007, there was nothing here but a shearing shed, tumble-down workers' houses and two windmills. They camped on the river bed for two years while they transformed the shearing shed into a cottage. To this end, the help of their friends and their son, Gerick, was pivotal: “They came on weekends and fetched rocks from

the veld, dug holes, poured drinks, massaged sore backs...” reads the information sheet in the cottage.

They also had the assistance of an architect couple and a quantity surveyor. The house was built using only rocks from the veld and 90% recycled materials.

Footpaths lead in every direction. Not being in peak form, we went for walks, meditatively putting one foot in front of the other, and before we knew it we'd managed to walk 10km. At one of the highest summits we could see Matroosberg in the west and, towards the east, Towerkop at Ladismith. On the way there and back we admired artful cairns, and here and there added a stone of our own.

More often than not, however, we spent our time sitting on the stoep and gazing at the landscape as it kept changing – different shades, shadows and clouds sweeping in to alter the view. >





Emmarie's advice

- Should you take along your cellphone (for taking photos, that is), bring your own power bank or car charger – there is no electricity.
- Be prepared for flies and mosquitoes. *(Don't forget about eco-friendly methods such as the fly swatter, or those sticky spiral ribbons that you hang from the ceiling – they're still sold at Spar and co-ops. – Eds)*
- Keep the back door shut at all times to keep the field mice out.
- Your last opportunity to buy ice is at Touwsrivier (for those travelling from the Cape) or Laingsburg (for those from the northern provinces). Get a cool box full while you're at it.
- Bring good-quality coffee, because there is a stovetop espresso maker and a plunger.
- Stop at Matjiesfontein, if possible, and have something to eat or drink at the hotel, and stroll through the museum.



ABOVE This sturdy canvas hammock invites you to relax and doze off.

TOP TO BOTTOM LEFT The cottage is the epitome of simplicity and comfort. The kitchen is equipped with everything you might need to cook meals. The main bedroom has a double bed (and the hammock is right outside the large window). The stoep room is now being converted into a dining room and they're building a new third bedroom with en suite bathroom.

FARM STAY

We'd read and we'd doze off. Then we'd get up to get something to drink from the gas fridge. And something to nibble on, of course. Then we'd read some more. The wood had to be stacked for the braai fire, but there was no rush. Bedtime wasn't at a fixed hour.

The concept of time disappeared. We ate and walked and swam and read and gazed at the landscape. And then we noticed an unexpected visitor at the gate: Modisa the blond Maluti shepherd dog that guards the Meatmaster sheep on the farm. But guests aren't supposed to feed or play with him, because Modisa should remain with the sheep.

At first he sat politely at the gate, but his curiosity got the better of him and he crawled through. He lay down at the back door. Then, when we headed to the stoep, he walked around and lay down at the bottom of the steps. He didn't demand any attention; he only wanted human company for an hour or two. Apparently, the sheep are well trained.

When it was time to leave, we wondered how we'd adapt to the real world again. But that was a problem that could wait. Time seemed to matter less. In fact, nothing seemed to matter any more.

To good health in 2023! 

Contact  snyderskloof.co.za

 emmarie@snyderskloof.co.za

TOP Dark storm clouds unleash another sheet of rain over the golden-green veld.

INSET Modisa the sheep – sorry, Maluti dog – came for a visit. It takes self-control not to pet him, but he is a working dog and meant to consider himself as one of the flock.

ABOVE RIGHT Tortoises abound in this part of the world, so you need to keep a lookout for them on the road.

RIGHT Cairns along the paths invite you to add more stones to the piles.



WIN

One lucky reader will win three nights' accommodation at Snyderskloof for four guests. Terms and conditions apply.

To enter, visit  platteland.net, click on

"Wen" and fill in the form with the keywords "Autumn Snyderskloof".

The closing date is 26 May 2023.





A change for the better

Emmarie has let us know that the cottage is getting an upgrade during February and March.

- The stoep room is being converted into a dining room – conveniently near the indoor braai – and they're adding a new bedroom and bathroom.
- They're installing a bathtub outside with its own geyser.
- The pool is getting a net deck so guests can lie back and gaze at the stars.
- The fence around the house will be removed because sheep are no longer kept in that camp.

LEFT You're so far from civilisation at Snyderskloof that even though you sometimes hear airliners flying from Johannesburg to Cape Town, they've only barely started their descent so it's hard to spot them.

BELOW There are few things more special than watching a glorious Karoo sunset while relaxing next to a braai fire.

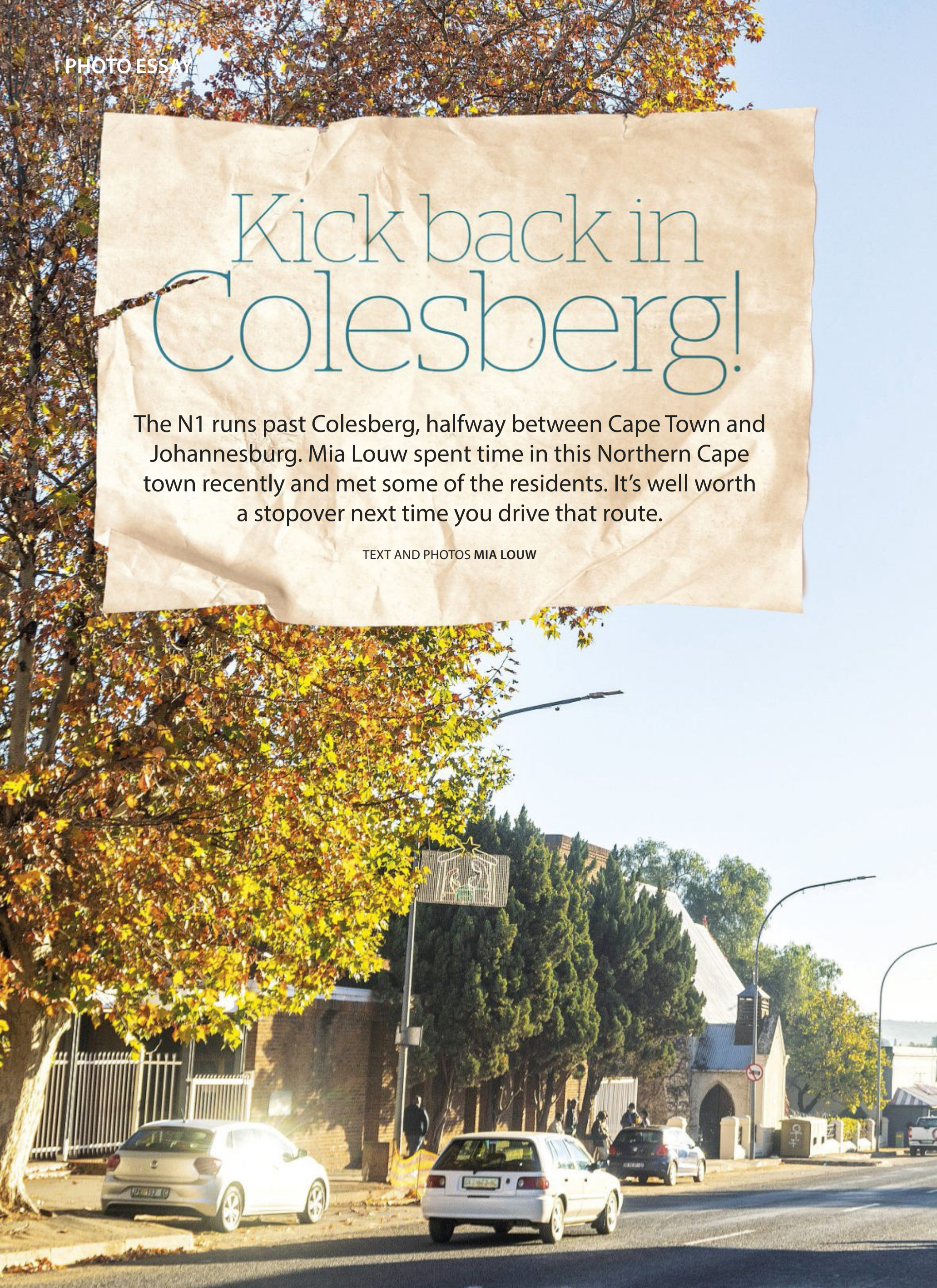


PHOTO ESSAY

Kick back in Colesberg!

The N1 runs past Colesberg, halfway between Cape Town and Johannesburg. Mia Louw spent time in this Northern Cape town recently and met some of the residents. It's well worth a stopover next time you drive that route.

TEXT AND PHOTOS MIA LOUW



Where old and new rub shoulders

Colesberg's Church Street is a mishmash of architectural styles and periods. It is almost as diverse as the people that have settled here over the years – from the hunters and gatherers of the Stone Age to the farmers, missionaries and transport riders of the late 1700s. Early in the 20th century, Colesberg had a large Jewish community – today, the synagogue that dates from 1920 houses a shop. Early in the new millennium, the town saw lots of changes, but in the quieter streets you'll find many renovated historical buildings that tell stories of yesteryear. >





“What are you driving – a Renault Duster? Don’t worry, you’ll show that road who’s boss.” I was reminded of these parting words of a Vanderkloof resident, Les Naylor, as I accelerated to get across a low-water bridge, the river spitting against our windows and windscreen. My two dogs, Bart and Phoebe, had their heads out the window; they could probably smell that we had almost reached the Karoo.

The 107 km stretch between Vanderkloof and Colesberg is mostly gravel. From Vanderkloof, you turn left onto the R369 at Petrusville. “Or drive to Philipstown,

then take a left onto that gravel road,” was someone else’s advice. But at Petrusville, the road was washed away after all the rain last summer and autumn. Virtually impassible.

My mother, Cisca van der Merwe, and I took a two-week trip through parts of the Northern Cape and Free State last year. I always joke that, as a freelance journalist, I can’t necessarily show her the Eiffel Tower in Paris or the Great Wall of China, but for the first time in her 72 years she had the opportunity to visit Philippolis, Bethulie, Vanderkloof and Colesberg.

In Colesberg, people were surprised when we said it was our first visit, as it’s a popular stopover for holidaymakers, especially when

travelling from the north to the coast. Colesberg is in the Northern Cape, almost exactly halfway between Johannesburg and Cape Town, with the N1 skirting the town.

As we approached this highway haven from the north-west, we saw Coleskop in the distance – the mountain that shares its name with the town. Since the 1800s, travellers, transport drivers, hunters and missionaries have used the 1 700 m-high landmark as a beacon. Torenberg, or Toverberg as it was also known then, was visible from a great distance. The ‘tover’ part, referring to magic, was apparently because of an optical illusion: as you get closer, it appears to become smaller.

In 1814, a mission station was established at Torenberg to

Going from strength to strength

"A few years ago, everyone said Colesberg was the fastest-developing town in the Karoo," says Cathy Meyer. Her grandchildren are the fifth generation to live here. "Noupoort had a bigger train station, but once the trains didn't stop there any more, the town went into a decline. Colesberg is next to a highway – that's how it escaped the same fate. Today, there are nearly 60 guest houses in town". >



evangelise among the |Xam people. By 1820 a number of large farms had been laid out and, in 1830, Sir Lowry Cole, governor of the Cape, granted 18 138 morgen (about 155 km²) of land to the NG Church to establish a congregation. In honour of the governor, the small settlement around the thatched church was named Colesberg.

THE KAROO TOWN is still growing today, thanks to the surrounding sheep farms and highway traffic. If, like us, you usually stay over in Bloemfontein on the trek across the country, a number of surprises lie in wait for you in Colesberg.

Lagonda Vorster of the restored Karoo Houses in Bell Street will keep you entertained in her garden

for hours. At the age of 81, she's as strong as a horse thanks to all the organic fruit, vegetables and herbs she harvests. Where we see weeds, she sees food and medicine.

"Why should I go to the doctor?" she asks. "Look at this African wormwood; it works for everything."

Then there is Peter King, who manages the guest house Coniston House, a Cape-Georgian homestead built by Thomas Plewman in 1835 that is still owned by the same family. Michael and Annalie King own The Barracks, a guest house named for the property's purpose as barracks during the Anglo-Boer War.

Go on, turn off the N1 and discover everything Colesberg has to offer.



Turning potential into success

Ritta Katise (right) was born in Colesberg, and after living in Pietermaritzburg for many years she and her husband moved back here four years ago. They own and manage a guest house in Kuyasa, and they used their pension money to start a piggery. The man with her in the photo is Piet Thomas, who works for her.

“We see potential here,” Ritta says. “We are involved in community projects such as recycling, tourism and business growth. We want visitors to stay over for longer and to enjoy their township experience.”



Magic mountain

Coleskop may fool you into believing that you’re not getting any closer to it, but as soon as you see Chargo Farm Stall at the foot of the mountain, you know you’ve arrived. It’s worth ordering something to eat at the restaurant, but if you don’t have enough time, buy some home-made preserves, rusks, biscuits, deli products, biltong, droëwors and free-range meat.

Self-sufficiency

Stay over in Colesberg at one of Lagonda Vorster's Karoo Houses in Bell Street. "These two cottages date from 1864," Lagonda says. "They both have a flat roof, called a *brakdak*, which consists of beams over which reeds were placed followed by clay soil, which was compacted on top of the reeds."

In her medicinal garden, Lagonda grows everything from belladonna to tomatillos. Comfrey is good for an upset stomach, she says, sorrel is a source of vitamin C, and horseradish is a source of calcium. She gives talks about natural healing at the old-age home, and she can turn her hand to most things. "My husband passed away two years ago. I used to tell him not to do things for me but to show me how to do them. I've fixed four toilets by myself!" >





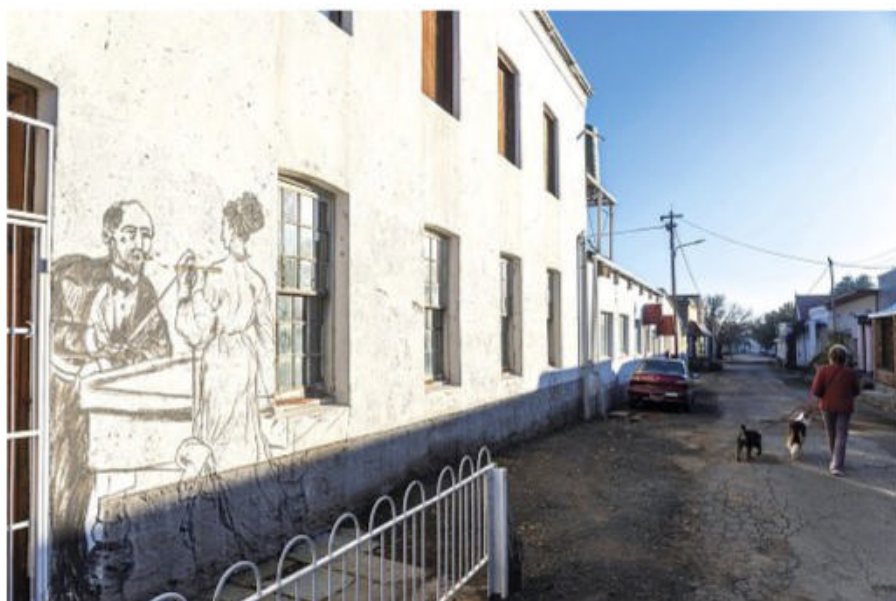


Street guide

Opposite, Shadow is busy sniffing out people and dogs in Dwars Street. Shadow thinks he is the town's dog, says his owner, Lizeth Taljaard – and he visits everyone every day. Lizeth's husband Japie is a former minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in town – he retired in August 2022. (You can see the church in the background behind Shadow.) In 2026, the congregation will celebrate its 200-year anniversary.

Seeing boer goats in the streets (left) is not an uncommon sight.

If you want to explore the more scenic streets, stroll down Bell, Stockenstrom and Rhyneveld streets. The Horse and Mill is a guest house in Bell Street, as well as a restaurant and pub housed in a coach house that dates from 1840. At the Kemper Museum you can buy the book *All Roads Lead to Colesberg*, which has a map showing the noteworthy historical buildings in Colesberg. >





From church to printing works to restaurant

"Our building dates from 1842," says Jackie Hendrikse (right). "It was the first Methodist Church building, but in the Sixties it housed the local printing works for the newspaper *Die Plattelander*." Today, Jackie and Venessa Potgieter, Norman Jeffrey, Louis Potgieter and Maryké Jeffrey own and manage Die Plattelander restaurant. All of them have another career as well; they say many hands make light work.

What's the most popular dish on the menu? "Lamb and lamb tails!" they answer in unison.



Award winners

"My great-grandfather started farming with top merino rams in 1887 and started our stud in 1907," says Jacques Pienaar. "My mother says my first words were 'mê-ê-ê'." Mega Merinos has been winning prizes for years. "In 1970, the ram Langman produced 54 pounds of wool – in those days, 80% of our income came from wool." As the market changed, Jacques and his father started to select sheep to change their wool-and-meat ratio – they now breed Merinos that produce 30% wool and 70% meat.



Deep roots

Five generations of Meyers have lived in Colesberg. Why? Cathy (left) says she wanted to raise her children in a small town, and her daughter Cindy says, "Because I'm a plattelander!"

Before Cindy moved to the Western Cape at the beginning of this year, she was a teacher at Colesberg High School. "My learners also asked me why I chose to live in Colesberg. So I told them that when I was at school, a friend and I smoked on the sly. One day, the neighbour across the street saw us smoking and told my father about it. That's why I like Colesberg... just like an adult told on me, I would expect someone in the community to tell me if my children were naughty."

Putting shoulder to the wheel

Hannes Vorster Jr is a diesel engine mechanic who works with his father at H&H Vorster Steel and Windmill Works. The place is packed with old cars, tractors and engines. When you hear that Hannes could drive a tractor at the age of 7, it comes as no surprise when he says he wanted to go to his matric farewell on a tractor. He showed us a faded-blue 1928-model McCormick-Deering tractor. "I struggled to fix it, and then abandoned the idea. My younger brother in turn wanted to use it for his matric farewell and tried for two months to fix it. We later found the problem, a small one – now it runs just fine." >



Fit for royalty

The homestead that houses Coniston Guest House was built in 1834. "Visitors often ask me whether the house is haunted," says Petter King, manager of the guest house and owner of Amadeus Mozart the schnauzer. Petter was born and raised in Colesberg. After a career in the entertainment industry and a glamorous life abroad, he returned to his hometown to take care of his mother. He looks like he belongs in this mansion full of antique furniture and art. "I love so-called rich kitsch," he says: "lights, bric-a-brac, tassels and gold. My grandmother used to say, 'Give Petter a piece of fabric and he'll make a drape.'"





The call of home

Lungile Mpemba, who works at the Kemper Museum, showed us where British soldiers moved two cannons up Coleskop during the Second Anglo-Boer War – the erosion line is still visible on the slope. “My grandmother told us that one of our relatives helped the British fight against the Boers,” he says, “but this history is not documented.”

Lungile, who was born in Colesberg, lived in East London for nine years before he moved back in 2004. He studied art and taught art in prisons in East London and Mthatha. But eventually he wanted to return to his hometown to make a difference here.



Wordsmithery

Writer Anel Heydenrych, here with her dog Simba, is a teacher at Umthombo Wolwazi Farm School, but it’s her journalism career that brought her to Colesberg. “I moved from the SABC in Johannesburg to Kimberley, and lived in Barkly West. I came here to cover a story and got lost. So I drove past this small house that was for sale...” Anel has lived here for six years, and her third novel, *Stomgeslaan*, will be published soon. **P**

HIDDEN GEM

Kliprand... Barely there



If you just drive, drive, drive north from Cape Town and you eventually find yourself on the R358 gravel road, beyond the Knersvlakte, on the edge of Bushmanland, and you start to wonder where in the world you are, you're getting close. Keep your eyes peeled, because Kliprand lies just over the hill. Or is it the next hill?

TEXT AND PHOTOS WILLEM VAN DEN BERG



In the remote, dry Kliprand, learners at Nuwefontein Primary School – with its windmill and vegetable greenhouse and two exceptional teachers – get not only an education but also meals and knowledge of the world beyond their immediate environment.

In June 2021, after three people from Kliprand had died of Covid-19 and 12% of the local population had tested positive for the virus, a decision was made to quarantine the entire village. “We got a big fright,” says Arrie Cloete, principal of Nuwefontein Primary School. “In a community like ours, when you lose three people in such a short time, it feels like death could come down that hill at any time.”



How do you describe Kliprand to someone who has never been there? How do you give someone directions to Kliprand if they’ve never kicked up dust on the gravel roads between Loeriesfontein and Garies? It’s difficult to convey the idea of this settlement, because it’s a borderline case. It’s almost a village, but somehow not. It’s on the outskirts of the Western Cape, although most of the farms in the area fall within the Northern Cape. Some people say Kliprand is in Namaqualand; others would swear it’s in Bushmanland.

What’s undisputed is that in the spring of 2022 Kliprand had a superbloom of wildflowers – no other region or reserve had a more spectacular display of spring flowers. The rocky ridges around the settlement swelled in yellow, orange

and purple waves. Gazanias, arctotis, buttons and vygies in a multitude of dazzling colours washed right up to the smattering of houses, five bluegums, one shop and the co-op.

It’s a rare occurrence, however, according to the shy woman shielded behind an outsize pane of Plexiglass at the Agrimark counter. “Ugh, it was dry for years. A terrible drought. The veld was drab, dull and dry. Times like that are tough,” says Cecile Smit.

During a drought, they feel the pinch at the co-op too. When the farmers hear the bleating of their hungry flocks, they spend their money on feed and not much else. “If it weren’t for the donations from all over the country, I don’t know what would have become of all of us. The rain came just in time.”

One of Cecile’s two sons farms in the area, and the other is a fitness instructor and personal trainer in Durbanville. “Interesting people

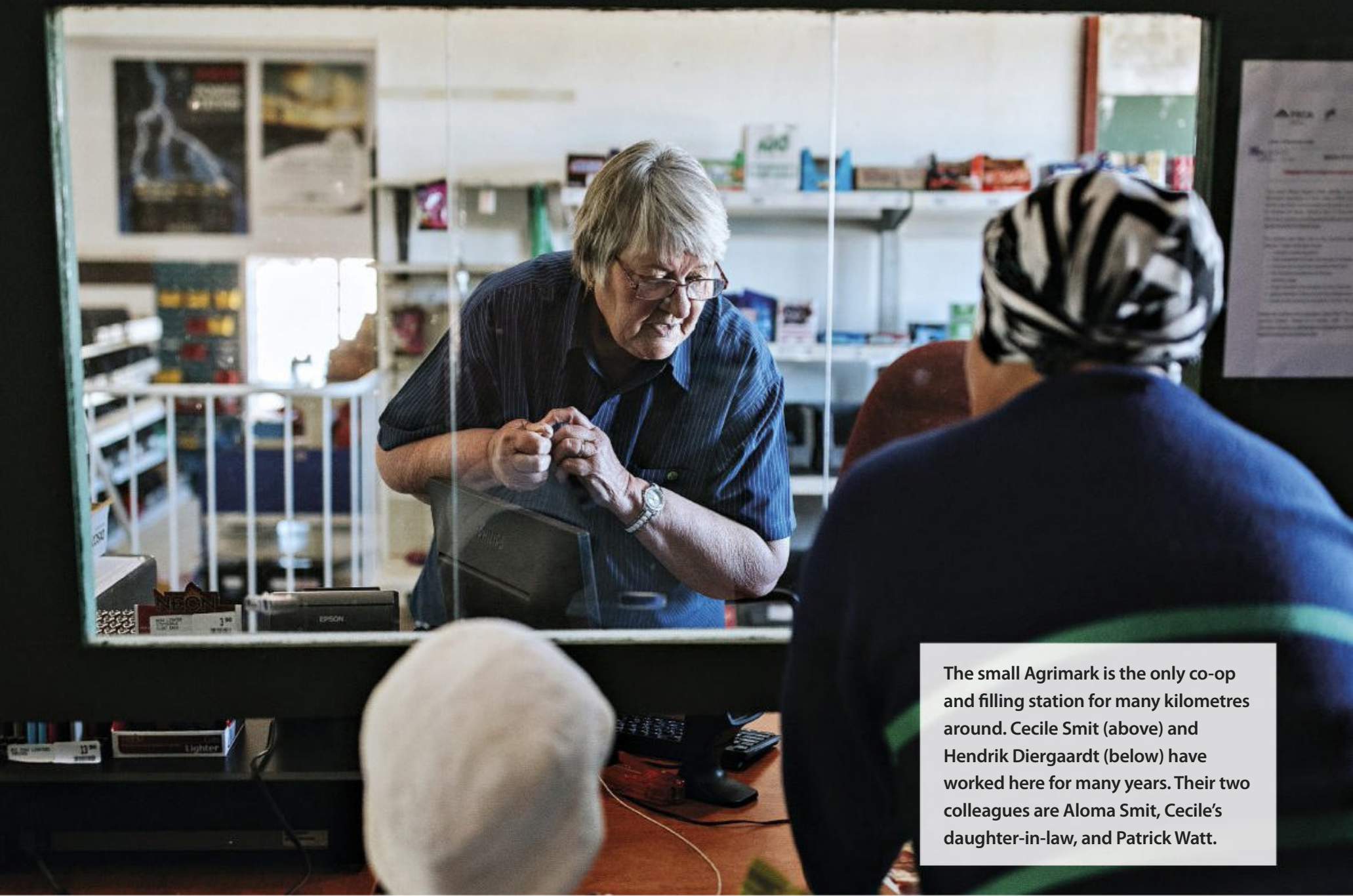
come from Kliprand, you know.”

In the co-op storehouse, Hendrik Diergaardt lifts 50kg bags of sheep finisher pellets onto his head and loads them on the back of a bakkie. He’s been working at the co-op for 18 years and has carried tonnes and tonnes of bags like these.

“I’ve thought about leaving and doing something else, but it’s not easy to do,” Hendrik says. “It’s 100km from here to Loeriesfontein and the nearest tarred road. Things are not much better there. And Cape Town... Well, what would I do for a living?”

So he has an implausible dream that he sometimes wishes could come true?

“I dream at night. Then I’m done with it. During the day I work. I don’t mess with that wishful stuff. No, man, I’m happy here. And there’s no way I can drop Tannie Cecile. I am happy. You have to be grateful; there are people who wish they could have my job.” >



The small Agrimark is the only co-op and filling station for many kilometres around. Cecile Smit (above) and Hendrik Diergaardt (below) have worked here for many years. Their two colleagues are Aloma Smit, Cecile's daughter-in-law, and Patrick Watt.



The gravel roads from Springbok,
Pofadder, Loeriesfontein and the N7
meet up here, spend a moment together
and then depart in different directions.



Arrie says Kliprand used to be managed by a Jewish family by the name of Lazarus, and once upon a time there was even a Chrysler dealer and garage here. These days, the farmers have to go to Springbok or Cape Town to have their bakkies serviced.



HIDDEN GEM



Johnny Dreyer is the only Kliprand who has been featured in *Rolling Stone* magazine. As a former member of the Klipwerf Orkes, he has enjoyed a taste of fame.

Hendrik looks out of the storehouse door, his eyes distant as if gazing at some far-off scene. Could it be an imprint of last night's dream that he's seeing in his mind's eye?

KLIPRAND doesn't have streets. The gravel roads from Springbok, Pofadder, Loeriesfontein and the N7 meet up here, spend a moment together and then depart in different directions. Few vehicles pass through Kliprand, and of those that do, not many bring visitors.

Valiant Swart once stopped by, says Leezel Dreyer of J Dreyer Algemene Handelaar. The wooden counter runs the length of the store. A vintage advertising plaque for Rembrandt van Rijn cigarettes above the cash register is an indication of when last the shop had a busy day.

"Valiant asked if he could photograph me behind the counter. 'Absolutely not!' I said to him. Just then, a bearded man with ragged

clothes came in, his pants held up with baling twine for a belt. And would you know it, Valiant snapped him. And now the whole world probably thinks everyone in Kliprand looks like that."

Would she like to change that perception by agreeing to have her photograph taken?

"No way; look at me! Maybe if I'd been dressed to go to town... but the odds are slim in any case."

A car stops out front, and Leezel spots the number plate. "A Cape Town registration number, *nogal*. They're probably lost."

The three Capetonian women say they're on a flower tour, and they'd like some ice cream.

"You won't get ice cream here," Leezel tells them. "What with load-shedding, our fridges are off way too often, and it doesn't make sense to buy a generator to sell three ice creams. I have bananas for you."

Off goes the bunch of bananas with the three women.



“Shame, they should be able to buy ice cream in Loeriesfontein.”

Here comes Johnny, Leezel’s husband, walking across the road.

“You can take a photo of him,” Leezel says. “He is Kliprand’s very own celeb – he played the drums for the Klipwerf Orkes.”

Johnny says it was quite by chance that he got involved with the boere-musiek band. “I helped them out one time, and then it turned into a permanent gig – for nearly 10 years.”

Good times, Johnny says. Trips across the country. Interesting people and experiences along the way. Then there was the time *Rolling Stone* magazine published an article about the Klipwerf Orkes, titled “The most famous band you’ve never heard of”.

“I’m telling you, the Klipwerf Orkes has a lot of fans. At some gigs, people in the audience went so crazy you could have sworn they were there to see Queen perform.”

Johnny misses the excitement,

the crowds. Across the road from the shop, in the building with the Firestone sign, he now fixes cars. It’s a one-man business.

“It’s all right. I had my turn to be among the throng. I don’t want to live anywhere else. This here is our place; it’s where I’ll draw my last breath.

“But listen, you’d better take that photo now because it’s cutting into my lunchtime. It means I’ll either have to eat less or have a shorter nap. And that’s a choice we here in Kliprand don’t like to make.”

ON A HILLSIDE at the southern end of Kliprand, children in their school uniforms are running around among the daisies, playing touch rugby with a tennis ball.

Nuwefontein Primary School’s motto is “*Kennis Is Lig*” – “Knowledge Is Light”. The bearers of light are Arrie and Amelia Cloete. Husband and wife. Sir and Miss. Principal >

Johnny and his wife Leezel own the only shop and liquor store in Kliprand – he inherited the businesses from his father. They still get mail, but Leezel has to go and fetch it in Upington, Calvinia and Vredendal.





People like Arrie and Amelia Cloete are rare, and teachers like them are even rarer. They're close to retirement; who will be their successors?

and secretary. A package deal.

"We have to multitask," Arrie says in a classroom voice that's way too big for the small office. "Our little school is in the furthest corner of the Western Cape; some days I wonder whether the Education Department knows of its existence."

Once school is out, he and Amelia spend time in the office, making sure the admin is up to date. When the windmill on the school grounds needs repairing, he puts on his overalls and does it himself.

"It may be a small school, but to be and do everything yourself is a major responsibility – and hard work. And by tomorrow morning you have to be rested and on your toes. You don't yawn in front of the little ones. We're all they have."

They offer the children much more than just knowledge.

"We can't help but notice when a child's school shoes are beyond repair or their clothes are looking

faded and worn," Amelia says.

"So then we buy them new shoes or clothes. You want every child to have self-respect and pride, even if they're from a poor home in Kliprand."

Now and then, Arrie and Amelia manage to scrape together enough money to take the children on a trip to show them what lies beyond their immediate horizon. So they know that the sea is real, what the Cango Caves and grass-covered sports fields look like, and what it's like to eat at a restaurant.

"For most people such outings might not be worth mentioning, but for these children they're often a first-time experience. It's important that they see what's out there to help them understand that they can and may dream bigger than their circumstances dictate."

Arrie knows how difficult it can be. He grew up on a farm in the area, where his father worked.

"School was the only place where I learnt about things that don't happen on a farm. It stimulates your imagination; it makes you wonder what else is out there. It gives you hope that you too can have some of those things."

Yet he returned to this small, spartan world.

Arrie is content. "I got around, saw places and did things I wanted to do. Now, it's good to give back to my people and to show others that they can get out too."

"You know, we don't even have cellphone reception here. Everyone depends on Wi-Fi. I share my password at home with people who cannot afford it so they can communicate with others and have access to the news. But when we have load-shedding, our Wi-Fi is gone too. Then we're cut off from the outside world, Brother. Poof! Kliprand disappears. Off the face of the earth." **P**



Nuwefontein Primary School has two classes: Grades 1 to 3, and Grades 4 to 7. When Amelia and Arrie are busy teaching learners in one grade, the other children continue with their exercises or homework.



If you happen to drive through Kliprand, do stop, take a walk around and say hello, fill up with fuel at the co-op, and buy bananas and cooldrink at Leezel and Johnny's shop. Who knows when you'll get the chance to see Kliprand again.

OPEN GARDENS

Hurry is one of those gardens where the abundance of water is almost overwhelming. Here, the visitor descends to a shady spot next to a small dam, fed by a babbling brook.

Paradise found



In spring, when South Africa's open-garden season is in full swing, we always marvel at the time, money and effort that go into opening up private gardens for the public to enjoy. When the Hogsback Garden Club hosted the Magical Roses & Rhodis weekend in November as part of its Open Gardens programme, *Platteland* was there.

TEXT JOHAN VAN ZYL PHOTOS PETER VAN NOORD



If you grew up in the arid Karoo or Namaqualand, and you regard a brown and grey landscape as the default, you eventually start to believe that lush green Edens with huge trees, moss-grown paths, and luxuriant roses and other profuse bloomers belong in fairy tales. So you grow fond of succulents and everything water-wise – until you find yourself, on a beautiful spring day in the Boland, in a dazzling English cottage garden and realise what kind of an effect it has on your mood to spend time in a place with such an abundance of green and masses of flowers.

Just wait until you see Hogsback, a village in a magical setting of mountains and forests in the Eastern Cape. Especially in October and November, when the Hogsback Garden Club has its annual Open Gardens programme, which involves opening private gardens to the

public from Thursday to Sunday on four consecutive weekends.

Since not everything flowers at the same time, there's a special Azalea Splendour weekend in October and a Magical Roses & Rhodis closing weekend in mid-November. The photographs on these pages were all taken over that final weekend – an adventure of fairy-tale proportions. Thanks to the temperate climate and high rainfall, many plants that are endemic to the Northern Hemisphere and are largely unknown in South Africa's arid regions thrive in Hogsback. A number of these gardens are huge and have numerous water features and walkways that must cost a fortune to maintain.

THE OPEN-GARDEN phenomenon spilled over to us from the UK, where avid gardeners and garden clubs in even the smallest villages open their gardens to the public

once a year, usually to raise money for a charity. Here in South Africa, too, in provinces such as Gauteng, Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape, open gardens are a thing, mostly in places with no shortage of water and ample rain in spring and summer.

What is rather surprising is why so many people are interested in visiting open gardens. If you enjoy gardening, you assume every other visitor is a curious gardener, there to admire the handiwork of others, be inspired and get fresh ideas for their own spaces. At some open gardens you can buy plants for next to nothing. Nicking cuttings and plants is strictly taboo, but there is always the chance you might run into the owner, as we did at May Lodge, where Viv Lodge was happy to hand out cuttings to visitors.

Many visitors are not themselves gardeners – they regard the event as



an opportunity to enjoy a day out with friends in a beautiful setting, perhaps enjoying tea and scones, or bubbly; others just like going for a walk in the outdoors and getting some fresh air. A woman who, for obvious reasons, did not want to tell us her name laughingly said she was there because she had always wanted to see what her neighbours' garden looked like.

Here's how it works

We bought tickets online from Quicket to see the open gardens on the fourth (and last) weekend of the Hogsback Open Gardens programme – they cost R120 per person (free for under-16s). With these tickets in hand, we had to check in at The Edge Mountain Retreat with its stunning views, beautiful gardens and intricate labyrinth, where we were given a map and a neon-green bracelet each that would serve as our passport for the weekend.

It's a self-drive tour: you could visit any garden on any of the four days, in no particular order, as long as you show your bracelet. (*That bracelet survived a daily shower.* – Eds)

Money raised during this event goes towards beautifying public spaces in Hogsback, including pavements, the Village Green and the magnificent Arboretum, a living tree museum with trees from around the world that the British colonial government of the time established in 1884. It's home to the tallest Californian redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) in South Africa.

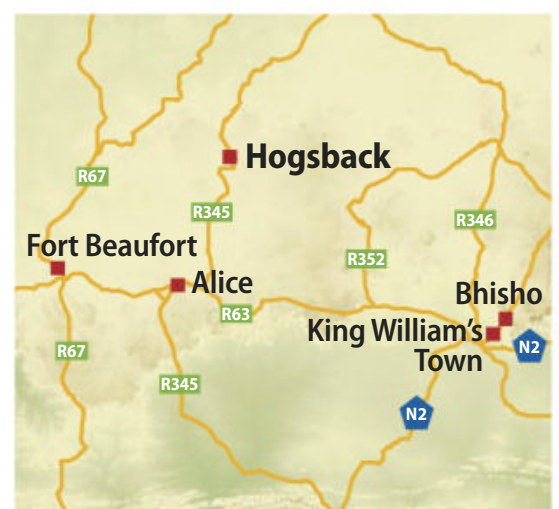
Don't rush. Go and sit on a bench somewhere in every garden and get a fresh perspective on gardening and on life. No one will tell you to move along. Watch the birds. Have a snooze. You're in paradise.

Contact  Hogsback Garden Club
 hogsbackgardenclub@gmail.com
 076 334 4856 (Sarah Currie) >

Hogsback's winding Main Road is flanked by massive trees, overgrown gates and wild rambling roses – even pine forests.

TOP LEFT Some locals cycled between the different gardens.

OPPOSITE A dam with spectacular water lilies at May Lodge.



OPEN GARDENS

THE EDGE

Most Open Gardens visitors start at Peter Colyvas and Wouter Jordaan's garden at the top of the escarpment that used to be the boundary between South Africa and the former Ciskei. Over weekends the farm becomes busy, with people descending on the restaurant, small shops and – on Saturday mornings – Under the Oaks Market (pictured right).

From the edge of the cliffs, which run around the property, you have magnificent views of the mountains, a waterfall and the Afromontane forest in the Tyhume Valley 500m below, where mist often swirls.

Allow enough time to explore the garden with azaleas, rhododendrons, beeches, birches, dogwoods, camellias, enormous oaks, chestnuts and a walled rose garden.

The highlight, however, is the 11-circuit labyrinth, which is 29m in diameter with a circumference of 91m – the total walk in and out is 1.4km. The design is similar to the labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral in France. It was completed in 2022.

Contact theedge-hogsback.co.za





MISTLEA

They say that in Dave and Jane Pledger's enormous garden, which lies on quite a steep slope, gardeners will always find something beautiful, and on the last weekend of Open Gardens, it was indeed the case.

The couple bought the property in 2003 and embarked on what they describe as the most fulfilling project they have ever undertaken together. They had to get rid of swathes of invasive black wattle and blackwood, and the entire place was covered hip-high in grass and brambles..

The slope leads to an impressive rose terrace garden that starts above the house. Beyond that you'll find, among others, a magnificent rose arbour and an azalea forest that we're told takes your breath away in October. During our visit in November, the roses definitely stole the show. In the rest of the garden it feels as though you're walking deep in a forest along a path that leads to a lovely pool of water with benches where you can have a rest, and to an azalea nursery (the latter closes between 13:00 and 14:00).

The Pledgers' youngest daughter, Sarah Currie, is the treasurer of the Hogsback Garden Club and organises the annual Open Gardens event. >



MIRRORS

Ken and Suneya Harvey's garden, a stone's throw from The Edge, is one in which you wouldn't mind getting lost. A stone reminds you that "Your life is a mirror" (of what goes on inside you). In this magical garden, which is relatively level, thickets, lawns and lots of azaleas are interspersed with open spaces and patches of wild meadow. Winding paths lead to, among other things, a wishing tree surrounded by a carpet of the softest moss, a labyrinth called Circles of Light, a dolomite stone circle and a fairy garden. It's just the place to do some introspection. Tucked away in the garden is the Crystal Corner Shop and the Mirrors Gallery, where some of Ken's beautiful photos of the Hogsback area are for sale.





HURRY

The picture-postcard ivy-covered house might have something to do with it, but when you walk through the tunnels in Dave and Alba Bilsbury's garden, it feels as though this scene has not changed in 50 or even 100 years. It's spacious, the paths are wide and grassy in places, and there are masses of azaleas and rhododendrons, as was the case in nearly all the gardens we saw. A friendly border collie accompanied us as we slowly walked down to a lovely section of the garden with ponds, a stream and a waterfall where you could spend days – unless you have a dog waiting for you to throw a stick! >



MAY LODGE

If you're not a fan of water-guzzling lawns, Viv Lodge's park-like grassy expanse may seem like a blot on the landscape. There's so much grass, you instinctively feel sorry for whoever has to mow it. It is bordered by flower beds with masses of plants. Of course, you shouldn't forget that Hogsback's annual rainfall is very likely much higher than where you come from, and once you start rambling and get to the middle of the garden with the lovely pond with water lilies and trees, you're hooked. Everything makes sense when you meet the generous Viv, who hands out cuttings left and right, and tells you how popular May Lodge is as a wedding venue. They also have self-catering cottages on the farm. We were fortunate enough to be greeted by Queen Ginger.





HIDDEN AWAY

Thean Labuschagne's spectacular garden sits on a steep slope with many steps, so the Open Gardens guide warns that it's not suited for people who have difficulty walking. In places there are signs that remind you to watch your step – even so, I slipped twice on a mossy slope and later on a moss-covered path.

In this garden with its multitude of roses, lanky foxgloves and ubiquitous azaleas, it's easy to imagine you're walking over

mountains and through valleys, and at other times, when you pass through a damp, sunless plant tunnel, you might as well be in the bowels of a forest.

Seeing this garden from the street is deceiving; in our opinion, it offered the biggest surprise of the Open Gardens weekend. (And it was just as big a surprise to find out that there's a cottage for rent in the garden – have a look at [f Hidden Away in Hogsback](#)) >



DUNSKYE FARM GARDEN

On the Sunday afternoon, there wasn't another person in sight when we got to Vince and Martie Wheeler's large garden on their farm about 10km from Hogsback. (Perhaps the Open Gardens guide's warning about the road's condition had put potential visitors off.) We were rewarded with the sight of a flock of blue cranes doing a little

dance before they left, calling in low-pitched, raspy voices.

At Dunsbye, there was another large, continuous lawn interspersed with trees and lush flower beds in which lupines, larkspurs and foxgloves outshone the other flowers. For us, the highlight of this garden was the formal walled parterre rose garden that Monika

Hof (pictured right) of Mon's Garden Rose Nursery designed for the owners to serve as a beautiful refuge during the pandemic. There used to be an old tennis court where the rose garden is. Roses of every colour you can imagine were in full bloom during our visit – a lovely sight, but we were surprised at how many of them had virtually no scent.

MON'S GARDEN

Monika Hof laughs when she says she cannot remember whether she moved to Hogsback in 2004 or 2005, but the town has clearly been good to her. She has a beautiful garden around her nursery, Mon's Garden Rose Nursery. Not that it's been all moonshine and roses: Monika renovated the rather neglected house on the property and moved into it, but then it was destroyed in a fire in 2013. So she decided to start a rose nursery in the ruins, with a part of it designed in the shape of a rose.

It's apparently one of the few gardens in Hogsback where the roses and the rhododendrons flower at the same time. Besides roses, the nursery also sells fuchsias and other plants supplied by members of the Garden Club. The nursery is usually open from 10:00 to 15:00 from Tuesday to Friday.

Contact  monsgardencottages.co.za

 monsgarden@mweb.co.za

 Mon's Garden  082 836 7414



LITTLE TIMBERS

Tony and Helen Chappel's garden is so enormous that you get a map showing all the different sections. No wonder it's called the Little Timbers Arboretum. Here, in addition to the ubiquitous azaleas and rhododendrons, there are many trees; a lovely natural grassland area where daffodils and other plants bloom in spring; flower beds with poppies, peonies, foxgloves and roses; and a section they call Maple Hill where various kinds of maple trees from China, Japan, Europe, Scandinavia and North America have been planted. There is also a small indigenous forest with yellowwoods, among other trees.

As you enter the property from the main street, on the right there is a network of paths that lead to a huge dam with masses of water lilies. A lovely path runs around the entire property. You need time to take it all in. >



ST PATRICK'S CHAPEL GARDEN

The chapel of St Patrick-on-the-Hill is a well-known landmark in Hogsback, especially when you ask for directions. The chapel was built in 1935 as one rondavel, and a second one was added in 1992 as the congregation grew. It is said to be the only church in South Africa that is never locked – it is always open for prayer and meditation. Yet you could just as easily do your praying and meditating in the lovely garden, where a multitude of azaleas, rhododendrons and love-in-a-mist have been planted. The Prayer Walk around the chapel is wonderful and offers lovely views over the valley. There are bathroom facilities at the chapel, and during the Open Gardens weekends, tea and biscuits were sold on the Saturdays.



MOONSHINE

Carol Neith's "small" garden is proof that size doesn't matter, according to the Open Gardens guide, but they probably say that because the other gardens are truly enormous. *(Let's put it this way, not for a moment did we feel claustrophobic at Moonshine.*

– Eds) It is a compact, cheerful typical cottage garden with poppies, fuchsias, love-in-a-mist, arum lilies, ferns and azaleas, benches and water features... and, unexpectedly, the only two succulents we saw in Hogsback the entire weekend – in pots and placed in a sunny corner on a stoep.

At the back of the house are a vegetable garden and a greenhouse, where we ran into Gordon Johnston. This local is renowned for his jams and the Norwegian salmon he imports and smokes. He was helping Carol by keeping an eye on things while she was taking visitors through the garden at St Patrick's Chapel. 📍



Open garden events countrywide

No open-gardens dates for 2023 were available yet at the time of going to print, but here's a list of popular regular events and contact details.

GAUTENG

Gardens of the Golden City

September–November & February

📍 gardensofthegoldencity.co.za

LIMPOPO

Kuhestan All Season Gardens

Open year-round 📍 kuhestan.co.za

KWAZULU-NATAL

Open Midlands Gardens

September–November 📍 Harcourts
Hilton Open Midlands Gardens

EASTERN CAPE

Bedford October–November

📍 Bedford Country Gardens

Hogsback October–November

📍 Hogsback Garden Club

WESTERN CAPE

Elgin October–November

📍 elginopengardens.co.za

George November 📍 georgeopengardens.co.za

Hoekwil November

📍 Hoekwil Open Gardens

Stellenbosch Garden Town

📍 gardentown.visitstellenbosch.org

Swellendam Garden Expo

November 📍 swellendamgardenexpo.co.za

Tokara Rare Plant Fair and Open Garden

22 April 2023 📍 opengarden@tokara.com 📍 rareplantfair.co.za

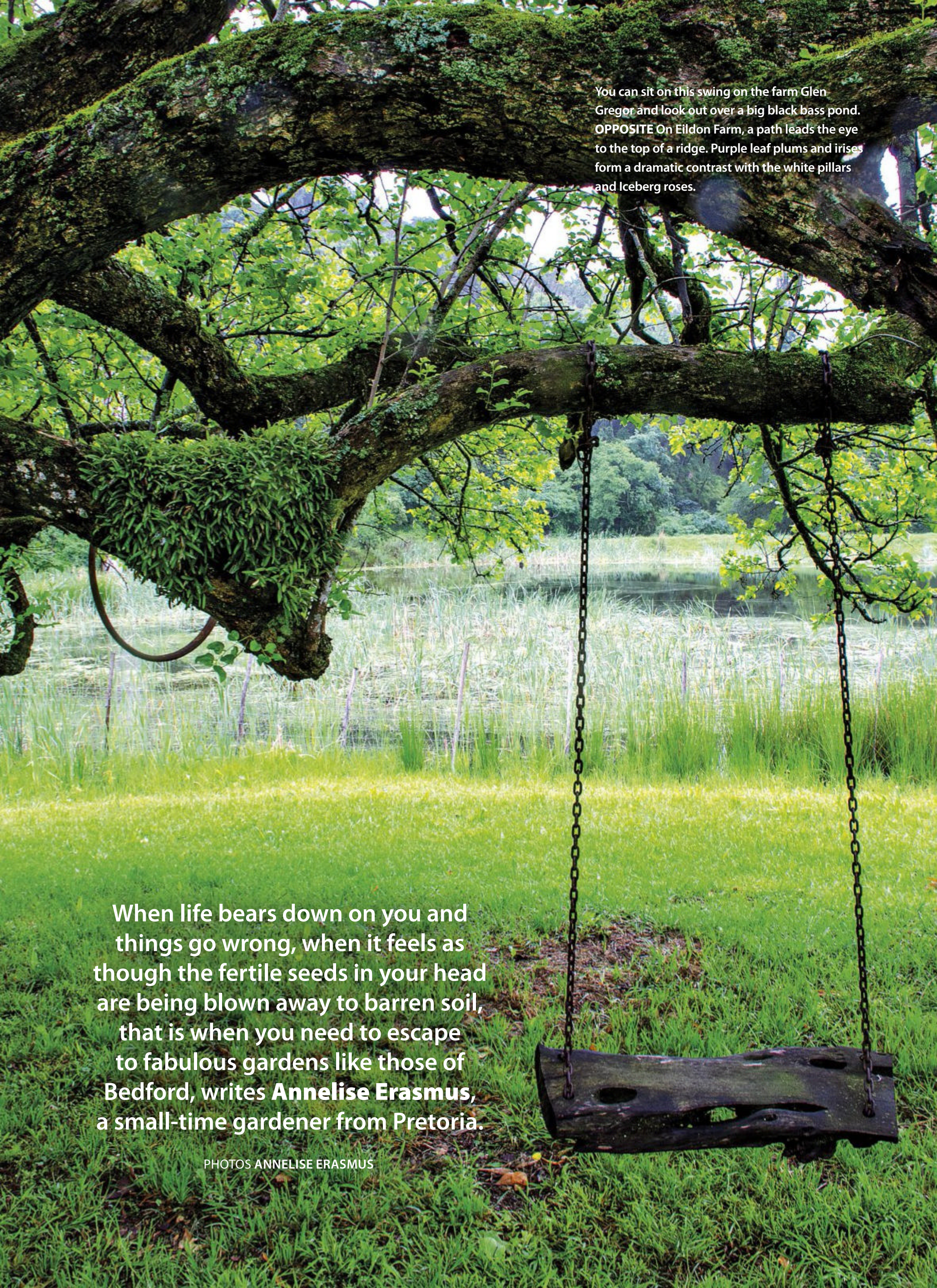
GENERAL

Open Gardens of South Africa

📍 Open Gardens of South Africa

OPEN GARDENS

Gardens for growth



You can sit on this swing on the farm Glen Gregor and look out over a big black bass pond. **OPPOSITE** On Eildon Farm, a path leads the eye to the top of a ridge. Purple leaf plums and irises form a dramatic contrast with the white pillars and Iceberg roses.

When life bears down on you and things go wrong, when it feels as though the fertile seeds in your head are being blown away to barren soil, that is when you need to escape to fabulous gardens like those of Bedford, writes **Annelise Erasmus**, a small-time gardener from Pretoria.

PHOTOS ANNELISE ERASMUS



The rain storm hits Bedford just as my husband and I arrive at the self-catering unit where we are staying for the weekend. The weather forecast predicted rain, and for a moment I resent the front causing heavy clouds to roll towards us over the mountains – which is unusual for someone who would like to be known as a gardener.

Then the strange sensation that has been bothering me for the past few days strikes me again as I sit down on the bed in the half-light of load-shedding: I feel almost weightless, like a feather or a dandelion seed head. It feels as though someone is blowing on me and I'm losing my seeds one by one.

I don't like this feeling.

To distract myself, I start working

out the routes to the open gardens I'd most like to see. This is my first open gardens event and I have been looking forward to it all winter.

Heaven's floodgates open and rain drums on the tin roof.

Bedford, a small town at the foot of the Kaggaberg in the Eastern Cape, is known for its wonderful gardens that attract visitors from far and wide in spring. Thanks to Bedford's location in the embrace of the mountain, the climate here is milder than elsewhere in the region and the groundwater table is higher.

When the sun comes out briefly, we visit our first garden, named Maasström, just outside Bedford. The town was founded when Sir Andries Stockenström sold a section of his farm Maasström in 1854 and named the new settlement after a friend of his in England, the eighth Duke of Bedford.

My Pretoria garden is roughly the size of one of Maasström's garden rooms – just large enough so that Simon, my once-a-week assistant gardener, and I can have fun.

The magnificent trees, several garden rooms and expansive lawns around the old farmhouse seem to have been a kind of blueprint for many of the other gardens we would visit. My first impression is one of such overwhelming beauty that the gardener in me wilts like maize in a January heatwave. In my mind's eye, my own botanical pride transforms into pumpkins and khaki bush in comparison to this... perfection. It feels as though another seed threatens to tumble from my dandelion head as I reconsider my self-described title of gardener.

I wander through the first garden room and the second, then past



OPPOSITE In the Maasström garden, neatly trimmed topiary forms an elegant backdrop to the fountain's sprays of water.

LEFT A flawless arum lily catches raindrops in its funnel-shaped petal.

BELOW LEFT Inca lilies brighten up an overcast day.



giant jacarandas and a spray fountain. It's just before sunset, and the light is mellow after the rain. Everything smells fresh.

Initially, I see only vistas. But then I begin to notice detail, the individual plants. I tell my husband their names as though I were the first person to come up with names for everything: fuchsia, bottlebrush, purple leaf plum, bougainvillea, Inca lily... The names flow from my mouth like a poem. When I spot a plant I'm not familiar with, I take out my phone to photograph it so I can look it up later on my gardening app. I notice design elements; I see which plants were grouped together and why. I know which plants are shade-loving and which plants prefer sunlight. All those gardening magazines, all the Facebook groups, my mother's knowledge of gardening, my regular trips to

the nursery and even more regular pinching of cuttings weren't in vain. I know something... I'm a gardener!

THE NEXT DAY, despite the rain still coming down every now and then, we tackle a dirt road that winds along a valley into the Winterberg where a large number of 1820 settlers established themselves.

When I think of those British immigrants, it reminds me of the first time on this trip that I had the dandelion feeling. My husband and I are holidaying without our children for the first time. My little seeds are floating away on air currents, and even though this is nature's way, nobody considers the feelings of the poor empty seed head that remains behind. How far from their British parents did these little seeds glide here to the southern tip of Africa? Today, >

ABOVE On Eildon, white roses and green foliage and grass match the colours of the house, unifying the building and the garden.



OPEN GARDENS

they grow, like their lovely gardens, robust and flourishing, seven generations later.

At the gate there is a tree in bloom that I would later identify as an Australian frangipani. Here at Eildon the children play with their exuberant Great Dane while their beautiful mother shows us around her garden. There is only one garden worker, she says, but he is there every day.

It's early, and it is cool and misty. The night's rain still glistens on the irises and roses, and a sweet fragrance hangs in the air. The lawn is like a carpet. Inspiration courses through me. I shake my head to >

RIGHT Pink climbing roses tumble over an arch on the farm Belmont, and chickens go about their business, seemingly oblivious to the visitors strolling among them.

BELOW The farm Maasström is just outside of Bedford. In this photo, only a small part of the large homestead and garden can be seen. Massive old trees give an indication of the many generations of families that have lived here since the land was granted to Sir Andries Stockenström in 1820. Just imagine the history that has played out in the presence of these trees.



This is a part of the Fairholt garden where formal and natural meet. It's a water-smart garden and the focus is on low maintenance, as one can see with the neat low hedge of imphepho, or *kooigoed*.





get rid of the annoying little dandelion seed that got partially dislodged yesterday. Then we drive to the next garden, splashing through puddles.

Heavy clouds give the backdrop an even more dramatic look while we learn that this garden is almost 70 years old and was designed by the current farmer's mother. As I stroll through the garden, I realise that even though the climate here is completely different to Pretoria's, it is indeed possible – with some effort and much love – to get most of the plants in these gardens to thrive back home. The biggest differences between them and the majority of our small suburban gardens is space and time, history and permanence – something our country lacks in many ways.

On our way to Bedford we stopped over in Richmond. There,

we spent a morning at the museum and heard how things we trust will be kept safe by someone somewhere, are disappearing bit by bit. Treasures such as tombstones and Victorian postboxes are vulnerable to thieves with no regard for heritage. There, next to the derelict cemetery, I felt another seed whirl from my head onto the sun-baked gravel. The sense of weightlessness was overwhelming.

HERE AMONG THE elephant's ears, wild rhubarb, Louisiana irises and jasmine, the roots of man and vegetation are strong and sturdy. They seem permanent, although you know it's just an illusion. Even that pin oak at Glen Gregor that was planted in 1945 will die – but that day is not today.

Today, it forms a massive canopy over ferns and clivias and

agapanthus. Today, it stands there in all its glory. It is a history that doesn't disappear. In fact, it is still growing.

Just to confirm this history, we enjoy a drink at The Mill next to the cricket pitch when the rain comes down again. The old photographs of the cricket teams on the walls seem to match the thick moss in the *leivoor* and on the stone walls of the building. The rain has shortened our day and we weren't able to see all the gardens, but before the sun goes down there is still a chance to be spellbound, for one last time, by viburnums, hostas, lamb's ears, sea lavender and a swing with a view.

Some of the roads we've travelled from Pretoria to Bedford have loosened more of my seeds. They fell to the ground without a purpose as we wove around potholes. To experience decline rather than progress only makes the seeds fall



faster... I feel increasingly lighter, with nothing to anchor me.

What to do when your seeds begin to blow away? The open gardens of Bedford have opened my eyes. Before your very last seed falls, put your head in the soil and start to grow. You become gigantic trees and lush lawns, roses in countless hues. You creep over houses and stand with your feet in muddy water while your elephant's ears listen to the birds calling in the branches. There are birds everywhere. There are roses in the Karoo thanks to an underground lake – just ask that man in Murraysburg.

All across South Africa there are open gardens where you are invited to walk and listen and smell and feel. We have our botanical gardens where you can show off how many names you know and prove you're a gardener too, even if you live in an apartment far above the ground.

Now, I know what to do whenever I start to lose my seeds. I have to go and stand in a garden... and shake and shake and shake my head until I start to grow. **P**

This is the view from the stoep of the beautiful Eildon farmhouse. The tall poplars and white pillars form a boundary but at the same time invite you to enter and explore another garden room.

ABOVE Yellow roses and purple irises make for a cheerful picture in front of a cottage.

OPPOSITE The formal rose garden with a spray fountain in the centre.



Down the garden path

For me, autumn is the most beautiful time of the year, both in the garden and in nature. The cooler weather also offers a reprieve for plants and humans alike after the hot summer months. Here's how to give your rose garden a boost before winter and how to preserve some of your vegetable harvest.

BY MAJA PALM



Kirstenbosch: best of the best!

Kirstenbosch, South Africa's largest and most-visited botanical garden, has won the TripAdvisor Travellers' Choice Best of the Best Award for 2022. This exceptional award means that a visit to this beloved botanical garden at the foot of Table Mountain falls among the top 1% of tourist activities in the world.

TripAdvisor is the largest travel review website globally – tourists have uploaded more than 200 million reviews on this platform.

This Best of the Best Award is the highest of its kind for excellence in the travel industry. It is determined by reviews from

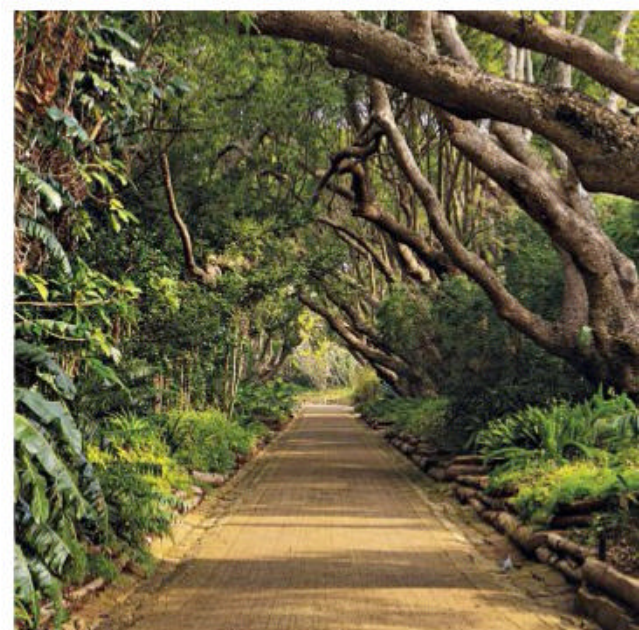
the past 12 months, with the number of reviews and their quality taken into account.

Kirstenbosch is home to about one-third of South Africa's plant species (7 000 of the 22 000), and receives more than 1 million visitors per year.

Contact  [sanbi.org](https://www.sanbi.org) and [tripadvisor.co.za](https://www.tripadvisor.co.za)

TripAdvisor reviews by two visitors to Kirstenbosch

Karen K from Georgia "So darn beautiful! I recommend having a guide, as the garden is vast and it would be easy to get lost and miss things like the canopy walk, the protea garden and the oldest tree in South Africa. We were there a couple of hours and could have easily spent more time wandering the beautiful grounds."



Nancymoo from Toronto, Canada

"We made a point to visit on Tuesday morning when the local birding group was doing its weekly walk guided by some of the club's experts. The flowers and birds were all lovely. We were intrigued that the many owls could be readily seen resting in trees all day long."



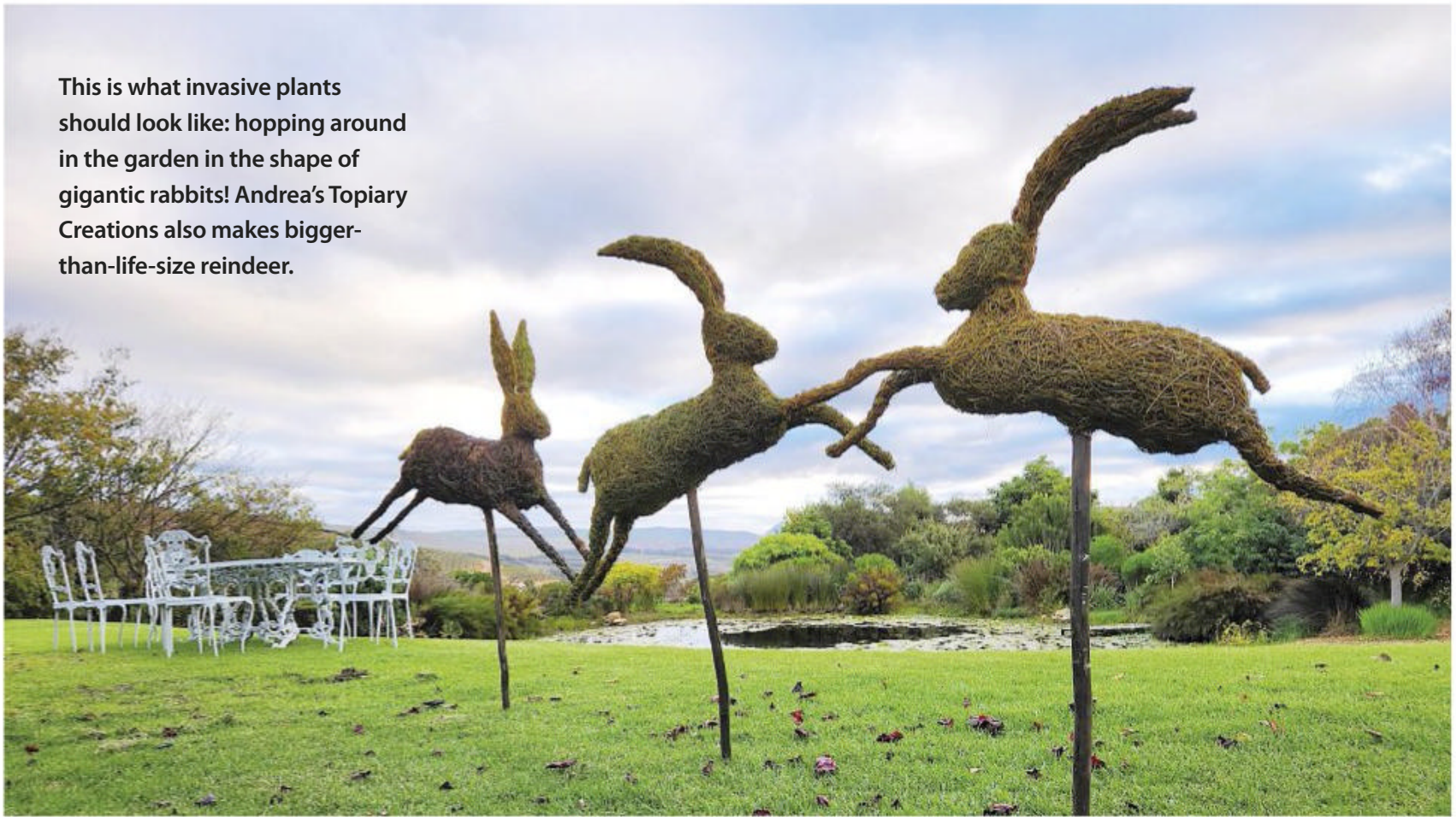
Gifts from the garden

The Kirstenbosch Shop sells a range of products inspired by the garden. Now you can buy them online and have your purchase delivered. About 90% of the items are created by South African artists and designers, including colourful ceramics by Potterseed, home decor items with digitally printed artwork by Sharon Boonzaier and table linen with screen-printed motifs by Carole Nevin, to mention a few. Also look out for the lovely bath products and candles with ingredients such as rooibos and *Aloe ferox*. Make sure to visit The Kirstenbosch Shop next time you're in the area – it's in the Visitor Centre at Gate 1.

Hours: Monday to Sunday 09:00–18:00 from 1 April to 30 September. From 1 October to 31 March the gates remain open until 19:00.

Contact [thekirstenbosch.com](https://www.thekirstenbosch.com) [kirstenboschshop](https://www.instagram.com/kirstenboschshop) 021 762 2510 >

This is what invasive plants should look like: hopping around in the garden in the shape of gigantic rabbits! Andrea's Topiary Creations also makes bigger-than-life-size reindeer.



ANDREA'S PLANT WONDERLAND

Invasive bunnies and other creatures

Rabbits, geese, goats and sheep... When you step inside the workshop of Andrea's Topiary Creations on a farm near Elgin, these are the creatures you encounter – all made from dried plant material. Some are bigger than life-size; others are small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. They are so characterful you just want to take them all home.

Andrea Semple started the business 22 years ago. "I gain inspiration from walking in nature," she says. "Like a sponge soaking up water, I absorb the textures of tree bark, the colours of the leaves, the sounds and the smells of the veld..."

Among her first clients was the florist shop Caroline Fine Flowers in the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, where Andrea's creations are still being stocked. Her creations are also displayed at several wine estates and hotels. And, thanks to a new online shop, anyone can now buy an Easter bunny, a reindeer, a lamb, a Christmas tree or a wreath directly from Andrea's Topiary Creations.

"The business has grown nicely over the past few years," Andrea

says. "I regard it as a privilege to have created jobs for 11 people from our community. Having grown up in the Eastern Cape, I speak Xhosa fluently, so we don't have any problems with communication in the team. We're close, like family."

Autumn and winter are Andrea's favourite seasons on the farm. That's when she relishes the opportunity to collect plant material and ideas. "I'm so excited about everything I'm gathering for the next season, I feel like a squirrel laying up provisions for winter!"



Andrea Semple in her element: in nature, gathering plant material

The cooler weather also means it's the best time of the year to dry flowers and other plant material – an art that Andrea says has taken her years to perfect. She gets a lot of her material from flower farmers, but she's also using more and more invasive plants nowadays.

The huge rabbits and reindeer that they make have a special place in her heart. "By the time Edward Nyoka, who has worked with me from the beginning, has finished one of these creations, the animal has a personality," she says. "I'm actually sad when a customer drives away with one of them."

Andrea is excited about the future of her business. "Being creative makes me happy. And there are few things as satisfying as lying on my back under a tree and coming up with new ideas."

Contact [topiary.co.za](https://www.topiary.co.za) [@andrea.topiarycreations](https://www.instagram.com/andrea.topiarycreations)
☎ 021 300 0943



When the roses are in full bloom

Thanks to the balmy weather and fewer hours of sunlight, roses produce a flush of blooms in autumn, with more intense colour and fragrance. Most rose garden shows around the world take place in autumn.



The popular Just Joey rose will reward you richly if you take good care of it in autumn.

Make the beauty last

The experts at Ludwig's Roses have a few tips for helping your flowers last longer:

- Rose bushes need sunlight to flower. Prune shrub and tree branches in your garden that have grown larger in summer and are now blocking the sunlight.
- Even though it's cooler than in summer, roses still need ample water. You can give them more water, but less often.
- Keep deadheading the flowers to encourage the plants to produce more blooms.
- Towards the end of the rose season, you'll notice black spot appearing, especially on the lower leaves – they turn yellow with black spots on them. Pick off the leaves by hand and burn them. If it's a bad infestation, you can consider spraying the rose bush with Chronos, a fungicide developed specifically for roses.
- Pull out plants that are constantly struggling and getting diseased.
- New rose cultivars and catalogues are usually launched in autumn, so get your orders in early. Ludwig's Roses makes its latest range available on its website.

Contact ludwigsroses.co.za



These roses were all picked from the same Burgundy Iceberg rosebush!

Q&A

Double take

Maja Palm asks: While walking through my garden one morning, I spotted a white rose among my Burgundy Icebergs. On closer inspection, I saw that two stems were growing from one cane – one stem with two white roses, and the other with burgundy blooms. Most remarkable was the single burgundy petal and the single half-burgundy, half-white petal on an otherwise white rose. How does this happen?

Ludwig Taschner of Ludwig's Roses answers:

The Burgundy and Brilliant Pink Iceberg cultivars are mutations of the white Iceberg, and it sometimes happens that some blooms, or even half a bloom, reverts to white. Enjoy the stunning phenomenon! >



MAKE IT YOURSELF

Quick pickled peppers

When you have a substantial late-summer harvest of peppers and chillies, it's a good idea to pickle some of the bounty. This is a short-cut pickle, so you'll need to store it in the fridge, where it will keep for about two months. Adjust the quantities according to the size of your jar(s) – the ratio is 1 cup vinegar for every 1 cup water, with 2 teaspoons sugar and 1 teaspoon salt. Add spices and garlic to taste.



YOU'LL NEED

- sweet peppers
- jalapeños or other chillies
- white-wine vinegar or apple-cider vinegar
- water
- sugar
- salt
- garlic cloves
- mustard seeds
- celery seeds
- black peppercorns

HERE'S HOW

1. Remove the stems, seeds and pith from the peppers, and cut into slices. Slice the chillies into rings – use gloves if they're very hot, and don't touch your eyes! Place the pepper and chilli slices in sterilised jars.
2. Pour the vinegar and water into a saucepan and add the sugar, salt, garlic and spices. Bring the mixture to the boil, stirring regularly, and take it off the heat once the sugar and the salt have dissolved.
3. Using a funnel, pour the hot pickling liquid into the jars. Compress the

pepper and chilli using a spoon to release any air pockets. Wipe the rims with a clean, damp paper towel and set aside to cool to room temperature.

4. Seal the jars and store them in the fridge.

Tips

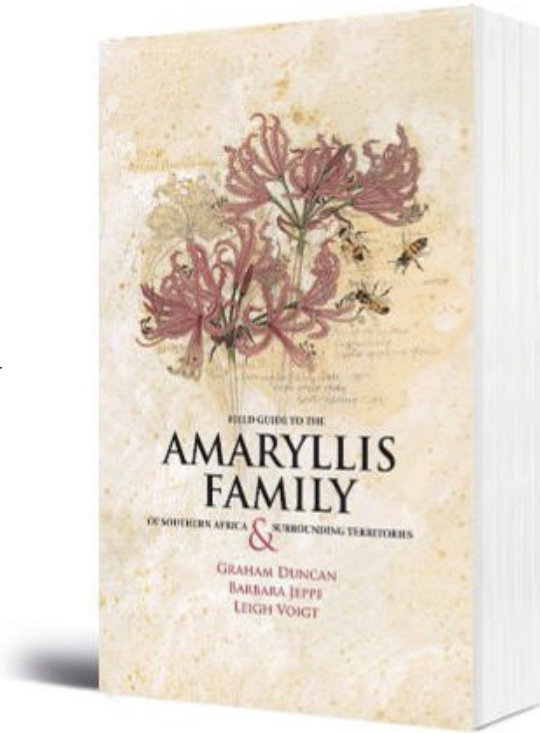
- Your pickled peppers will be ready to eat in two days, but the flavours will improve even more if you wait a bit longer.
- Use the pickled peppers on sandwiches, in salads or omelettes, as part of a cheese platter and as a general condiment.

Source keviniscooking.com

Know your amaryllis species

It took 45 years to put together the highly regarded *The Amaryllidaceae of Southern Africa*, the first book by Graham Duncan, Barbara Jeppe and Leigh Voigt about the rich variety of species in the Amaryllidaceae family that are native to Southern Africa. This comprehensive guide is now being reissued in a user-friendly field-guide format with 560 new photographs and 14 additional watercolour paintings.

Entries on various species, grouped according to their natural habitat, are illustrated with photos and illustrations by botanical artists Barbara and Leigh.



Graham, a botanist and specialist horticulturalist at the South African National Biodiversity Institute, describes each species and shares information about its flowering period, life cycle, distribution, habitat, medicinal and lethal properties, and conservation status.

This 547-page book is a valuable field guide for botanists and us ordinary plant lovers alike.

Field Guide to the Amaryllis Family of Southern Africa & Surrounding Territories by Graham Duncan, Barbara Jeppe and Leigh Voigt, Kew Publishing, 2022, R480 (recommended retail price)

AUTUMN IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

Plant now

This is the time to plant vegetables that like the cooler weather, so you can make soup with the harvest from your own garden.



Carrots are sweeter and tastier if you plant them in autumn and harvest them in winter.



Broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage thrive in cooler weather. Plant seedlings in early autumn.



Garlic should be planted in autumn so it can hang around in the soil and get fat through winter, and be ready for harvesting in summer.



Peas and beetroot should ideally be planted two months before the first frost; once they've taken root properly they'll be able to withstand the cold.



Radishes don't mind chilly weather or even light frost. 



Lunar planting: a 3-month guide

Gaye Boshoff offers advice on when and what to plant in the vegetable garden in March, April and May to help gardeners create a healthy growing cycle.

Understanding the basics

Moon phases

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

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



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



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



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



1 Pick your climate zone

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

Winter rainfall Western Cape

Summer tropical Mpumalanga; KwaZulu-Natal Lowveld and Coast

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

Dry continental Western Free State; Northern Cape; North West

2 What to plant

(S Sow | T Transplant | P Plant)

WINTER RAINFALL

Western Cape

March

 Coriander ST; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST;  Broccoli T; Brussels sprouts T; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST; Camomile S;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST; Leeks ST;  Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Parsnip S; Radish S; Strawberries T; Turnips ST;  Potatoes P;  Chives T; Garlic P; Spring Onion ST

April

 Coriander ST; Endive S; Escarole S; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST;  Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST; Camomile S;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST; Leeks ST;  Broad beans S; Peas S;  Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Parsnip S; Radish S; Strawberries T; Turnips ST;  Garlic P; Onion S; Spring Onion ST

May

 Endive S; Escarole S; Kale T; Lettuce ST; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard T;

 Cabbage T; Cauliflower T;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST; Leeks ST;  Broad beans S; Peas S;  Beetroot T; Carrots S; Radish S; Turnips ST;  Potatoes P;  Onion S; Spring Onion T

SUMMER TEMPERATE

Gauteng, Limpopo & Free State Highveld

March

 Coriander ST; Endive S; Escarole S; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST;  Broccoli T; Brussels sprouts T; Cabbage ST; Cauliflower ST; Camomile S; Echinacea S;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST; Leeks ST;  Peas S;  Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Parsnip S; Radish S; Strawberries T; Turnips ST;  Chives T; Garlic P; Onion S; Spring Onion ST

April

 Coriander ST; Endive S; Escarole S; Kale T; Lettuce ST; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard T;  Broccoli T; Cabbage T; Cauliflower T; Camomile S; Echinacea S;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST; Leeks T;  Broad beans S;  Beetroot T; Carrots S; Radish S; Strawberries T; Turnips ST;  Garlic P; Onion S; Spring Onion ST

May

 Endive S; Escarole S; Lettuce T; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach T;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST;  Broad beans S;  Beetroot T; Carrots S; Turnips T;  Onion S; Spring Onion T

SUMMER TEMPERATE

KwaZulu-Natal Midlands

March

 Coriander ST; Kale ST; Lettuce ST; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard ST;  Broccoli T; Brussels sprouts T; Cabbage T; Cauliflower ST; Camomile S; Echinacea S;

VEGETABLE & HERB SYMBOLS



LEAF vegetables or HERBS

The edible leaves of plants.



FLOWER vegetables The edible flowers of certain vegetables.



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



FRUIT vegetables These are fleshy and contain seeds.



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



ROOT vegetables Usually a long or round taproot.



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



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



Kohlrabi ST; Leeks ST;



Peas S;



Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Parsnip S; Radish S; Strawberries T; Turnips ST;



Chives T; Garlic P

April

 Coriander ST; Kale T; Lettuce T; Rocket S; Spinach ST; Swiss chard T;  Broccoli T; Cabbage T; Cauliflower T; Camomile S; Echinacea S;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST; Leeks T;  Broad beans S;  Beetroot ST; Carrots S; Parsnip S; Radish S; Strawberries T; Turnips ST;  Garlic P; Onion S; Spring Onion ST

May

 Endive S; Escarole S; Lettuce T; Radicchio S; Rocket S; Spinach T;  Celery ST; Kohlrabi ST;  Broad beans S;  Beetroot T; Carrots S; Turnips T;  Onion S; Spring Onion T

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SUMMER TEMPERATE

Eastern Cape & Little Karoo

March

 Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Swiss chard **ST**; Broccoli **T**; Brussels sprouts **T**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**; Camomile **S**; Echinacea **S**; Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**; Beetroot **T**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**; Turnips **ST**; Potatoes **P**; Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Spring Onion **ST**

April

 Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Swiss chard **T**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**; Camomile **S**; Echinacea **S**; Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**; Broad beans **S**; Beetroot **T**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**; Turnips **T**; Potatoes **P**; Garlic **P**; Onion **S**; Spring Onion **ST**

May

 Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **T**; Lettuce **T**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Cabbage **T**; Cauliflower **T**; Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **T**; Broad beans **S**; Peas **S**; Carrots **S**; Radish **S**; Potatoes **P**; Onion **S**; Spring Onion **T**

SUMMER TROPICAL

Mpumalanga

March

 Amaranth **S**; Asian Greens **S**; Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**; Oregano **T**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **T**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**; Watercress **ST**; Broccoli **T**; Brussels sprouts **T**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**; Echinacea **S**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**; Rhubarb **T**; Cucumber **S**; Eggplant **ST**; Marrow **S**; Peppers (hot and sweet) **ST**; Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**; Tomatoes **ST**

 French beans **S**; Lima beans **S**; Peas **S**; Runner beans **S**; Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Turnips **ST**; Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Onion **S**; Spring Onion **ST**

April

 Asian greens **S**; Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **T**; Lettuce **ST**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**; Sage **T**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**; Watercress **ST**; Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **T**; Camomile **S**; Echinacea **S**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**; Rhubarb **T**; Cucumber **S**; Eggplant **ST**; Marrow **S**; Peppers (hot and sweet) **ST**; Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**; Tomatoes **ST**; Broad beans **S**; French beans **S**; Lima beans **S**; Peas **S**; Runner beans **S**; Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**; Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**; Turnips **ST**; Potatoes **P**; Garlic **P**; Onion **S**; Spring Onion **ST**

3 When to plant

Follow the guide below to time your planting according to the phases of the moon, and look out for the next instalment in Platteland #39, on sale from 29 May 2023.

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

   **Full moon** (Tue, 7 Mar, at 14:40) **to last quarter** (Wed, 15 Mar, at 04:08)

   **Last quarter** (Wed, 15 Mar, at 04:08) **to new moon** (Tue, 21 Mar, at 19:23)

    **New moon** (Tue, 21 Mar, at 19:23) **to first quarter** (Wed, 29 Mar, at 04:32)

   **First quarter** (Wed, 29 Mar, at 04:32) **to full moon** (Thu, 6 Apr, at 06:34)

   **Full moon** (Thu, 6 Apr, at 06:34) **to last quarter** (Thu, 13 Apr, at 11:11)

   **Last quarter** (Thu, 13 Apr, at 11:11) **to new moon** (Thu, 20 Apr, at 06:12)

    **New moon** (Thu, 20 Apr, at 06:12) **to first quarter** (Thu, 27 Apr, at 23:20)

   **First quarter** (Thu, 27 Apr, at 23:20) **to full moon** (Fri, 5 May, at 19:34)

   **Full moon** (Fri, 5 May, at 19:34) **to last quarter** (Fri, 12 May, at 16:28)

   **Last quarter** (Fri, 12 May, at 16:28) **to new moon** (Fri, 19 May, at 17:53)

    **New moon** (Fri, 19 May, at 17:53) **to first quarter** (Sat, 27 May, at 17:22)

   **First quarter** (Sat, 27 May, at 17:22) **to full moon** (Sun, 4 Jun, at 05:42)

May

 Asian Greens **S**; Coriander **ST**;
 Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Lettuce **T**;
 Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Spinach **ST**;
 Swiss chard **ST**; Watercress **ST**;
 Cabbage **ST**; Camomile **S**;
 Echinacea **S**;
 Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **T**;
 Cucumber **S**; Eggplant **ST**;
 Marrow **S**; Peppers (hot and sweet) **T**;
 Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**; Tomatoes **ST**;
 Broad beans **S**; French beans **S**;
 Lima beans **S**; Peas **S**; Runner beans **S**;
 Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Ginger **P**;
 Horseradish **P**; Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**;
 Turmeric **P**; Turnips **ST**;
 Potatoes **P**;
 Spring Onion **ST**

**SUMMER TROPICAL****KwaZulu-Natal Lowveld & Coast****March**

 Amaranth **S**; Asian greens **S**;
 Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**;
 Kale **ST**; Lettuce **ST**; Marjoram **T**; Mint **T**;
 Oregano **T**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**;
 Rosemary **T**; Sage **T**; Spinach **ST**;
 Swiss chard **ST**; Watercress **ST**;
 Broccoli **T**; Brussels sprouts **T**;
 Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **ST**;
 Echinacea **S**;
 Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**; Rhubarb **T**;
 Cucumber **S**; Eggplant **ST**;
 Marrow **S**; Peppers (hot and sweet) **ST**;
 Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**; Tomatoes **ST**;
 French beans **S**; Beans (Lima) **S**;
 Peas **S**; Runner beans **S**;
 Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**;
 Radish **S**; Turnip **ST**;
 Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Spring Onion **ST**

April

 Asian greens **S**; Coriander **ST**;
 Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Kale **T**; Lettuce **ST**;
 Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Rosemary **T**;
 Sage **T**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**;
 Watercress **ST**;
 Cabbage **ST**; Cauliflower **T**

Camomile **S**; Echinacea **S**;

 Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **ST**; Rhubarb **T**;
 Cucumber **S**; Eggplant **ST**;
 Marrow **S**; Peppers (hot and sweet) **ST**;
 Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**; Tomatoes **ST**;
 Broad beans **S**; French beans **S**;
 Lima beans **S**; Peas **S**; Runner beans **S**;
 Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**;
 Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**; Turnips **ST**;
 Potatoes **P**;
 Garlic **P**; Onion **S**; Spring Onion **ST**

May

 Asian greens **S**; Coriander **ST**;
 Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Lettuce **T**;
 Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Spinach **ST**;
 Swiss chard **ST**; Watercress **ST**;
 Cabbage **ST**; Camomile **S**;
 Echinacea **S**;
 Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **T**;
 Cucumber **S**; Eggplant **ST**;
 Marrow **S**; Peppers (hot and sweet) **T**;
 Pumpkin **S**; Squash **S**; Tomatoes **ST**;
 Broad beans **S**; French beans **S**;
 Lima beans **S**; Peas **S**; Runner beans **S**;
 Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Ginger **P**;
 Horseradish **P**; Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**;
 Turmeric **P**; Turnips **ST**;
 Potatoes **P**;
 Onion **S**; Spring Onion **ST**

DRY CONTINENTAL**Western Free State, Northern Cape & North West****March**

 Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**;
 Kale **T**; Lettuce **ST**; Radicchio **S**;
 Rocket **S**; Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **ST**;
 Broccoli **T**; Brussels sprouts **T**;
 Cabbage **T**; Cauliflower **T**; Camomile **S**;
 Echinacea **S**;
 Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**; Leeks **T**;
 Beetroot **ST**; Carrots **S**; Parsnip **S**;
 Radish **S**; Strawberries **T**; Turnips **ST**;
 Potatoes **P**;
 Chives **T**; Garlic **P**; Onion **S**;
 Spring Onion **ST**

April

 Coriander **ST**; Endive **S**; Escarole **S**;
 Lettuce **T**; Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**;
 Spinach **ST**; Swiss chard **T**;
 Broccoli **T**; Cabbage **T**;
 Camomile **S**; Echinacea **S**;
 Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**;
 Broad beans **S**;
 Beetroot **T**; Strawberries **T**; Turnips **ST**;
 Garlic **P**; Spring Onion **ST**

May

 Endive **S**; Escarole **S**; Lettuce **T**;
 Radicchio **S**; Rocket **S**; Spinach **T**;
 Celery **ST**; Kohlrabi **ST**;
 Beetroot **T**; Turnips **T**;
 Onion **S**; Spring Onion **T** **P**

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FROM GARDEN TO TABLE



A lush garden with various green plants and a building in the background. The garden is filled with a variety of green plants, including large-leafed plants in the foreground and smaller, more delicate plants in the background. A building with a red roof is visible in the background, partially obscured by the foliage. The overall scene is a vibrant and healthy garden.

Goodness from the earth

When the countrywide lockdown was first announced in 2020, Rina Theron looked at her garden and wondered how long she could sustain herself using her own harvest and indigenous edible plants. In her new book *Sandveldkos: Tuin tot Tafel*, she shares this journey of discovery and the recipes with which she experimented.



Wondrous heerenbone, which thrive in sandy soil. Above are the flowers and young pods, and on the right the ripe pods, which each contain two beans.



Have you ever noticed that the packaging of some products lists different countries of origin? South Africa might be indicated in a large font, but often this is followed by text in small print: “Packaged in...”

Rina Theron tackles this topic at the start of the chapter “*Gesondheid uit die grond uit*” (Goodness from the earth) in her second self-published book, *Sandveldkos: Tuin tot Tafel* (Sandveld food: from garden to table). It details her quest to live closer to nature while doing something about her concern regarding food security.

In South Africa, food producers and manufacturers have to be accredited, and traceability codes have to be printed on the packaging. These codes make it possible to trace any harmful substances in food all the way to

their source, but the “assurance” only pertains to those who do apply for accreditation. Who takes responsibility for the faceless and nameless producers and manufacturers of which the country of origin seems to be a mystery?

“Besides the guesswork about the country of origin, manufactured products often also contain all sorts of hormones, colourants, seasoning, flavouring agents and preservatives that I cannot condone.

“I am not saying that everything produced in factories is bad for you. However, it is shocking how much hidden sugar and salt we ingest daily under the guise of ‘healthy food’. Few people realise that a breakfast consisting of one bowl of breakfast cereal, one cup of low-fat milk, one small tub of fruit-flavoured yoghurt and one glass of fruit juice already exceeds the recommended daily allowance of sugar. Others fall for the fad of

‘low fat’ on the packaging but forget that sugar and salt would need to be added to compensate for the taste lost through the removal of fat.”

IF THIS retired potato grower from the farm Aan het Berg near Leipoldville in the Sandveld seems familiar to you, you may recall the feature in *Platteland* #24 (Spring 2019) about how she threw herself into vegetable gardening, which used to be part of her life from a young age, with renewed vigour and focus after her retirement.

While doing research for her previous book, *Sandveldkos: Kosnostalgie en Stories van Gister* (Sandveld food: culinary nostalgia and stories from yesteryear), Rina became aware of how, in days gone by, people had little choice but to cook from and live off the veld and their kitchen gardens. Roads were no more than sandy tracks, shops

were few and far between, money was scarce and the peddler with his wagon was the only supplier of basic necessities. She, too, had to learn to improvise with what she could get hold of as a young newlywed on a Sandveld farm.

After travelling to China in May 2018 to receive the Gourmand World Cookbook Award for World Best: Local Cuisine, Africa, for her first book, she attended one of Dr Ernst van Jaarsveld's courses on indigenous veld plants at Babylonstoren.

"Ernst's unbelievable knowledge of every edible leaf, fruit, root and tuber – and chef Zante Neethling's particular flair for colour, flavour and texture combinations – served to motivate me further to learn more about what is available in my environment."

According to Ernst, our knowledge of indigenous edible plants and other foods mostly originates from

the Khoekhoen, who led a nomadic existence and were dependent on veld food like the edible corms known as uintjies (*Moraea fugax*, *Cyanella hyacinthoides*, *Watsonia* spp), bitter almond (*Brabejum stellatifolium*), waterblommetjies (*Aponogeton distachyos*), wild asparagus (*Trachyandra falcata*), fire-cracker vine (*Microlooma sagittatum*), aroena (*Quaqua* spp) and baroe (*Cyphia* spp).

The West Coast sour fig (*Carpobrotus quadrifidus*) is unique to the Sandveld coastal area and features the largest flower in the vygie family (*Aizoaceae*). Its singular fruit is harvested late in spring, when it is fragrant and soft. The texture is not unlike that of a kiwi fruit. It can be used in a fruit salad or eaten raw on its own. There is also the carpanthea (*vetkousie*), a very pretty annual vygie with golden-yellow flowers of which the young fruit were used in the >



Rina's vegetable garden is a wild, jumbled, flourishing feast of heirloom vegetables, indigenous edible plants and herbs, with a splash of exuberant colour here and there.

How to cook heerenbone

There's no need for soaking them overnight. Some food writers maintain that heerenbone need to be soaked overnight before they're cooked. This is an outdated concept, however, because if you soak the beans you set off a chemical process that makes them germinate, which would be evident when you open up one of the beans. This chemical process alters the taste and smell of the beans and they will take much longer to cook.

Don't add salt to the water.

Never, ever make the mistake of adding salt before or while you are cooking the dried beans.

Here's how... Rinse the beans in fresh water, then soak them in clean water for 30 minutes. Drain them, then add some lukewarm water. Heat to boiling point, reduce the heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Rinse the beans in fresh water once more. Return the saucepan to the stove and add warm water (about three fingers deep). Heat it to boiling point, reduce the heat and simmer the beans, but take care not to overcook them. Use a toothpick to test whether the beans are done. They should remain whole, so don't stir them – but do shake the saucepan lightly when the water has reduced to prevent them from catching. The total cooking time will be determined by how long you've stored your beans. You can turn off the heat and let the beans stand on the warm plate to absorb the last of the liquid in the saucepan.

Freeze the cooked beans or make bread, soups, stews...

Cooked heerenbone freeze very well and can be used in many ways (turn to page 122 for recipes) – and if you've never tasted *smoorsnoek* with heerenbone, you don't know what you're missing.

same way as waterblommetjies.

Aside from using indigenous plants, these days Rina exclusively uses unbleached stone-milled flour without additives or preservatives.

“I prefer to use free-range chickens and their eggs, as well as meat that is produced locally. Other preferred options include dairy products of which I can tell the origin on the packaging, unrefined sugar, pure South African olive oil and goat’s milk cheese that is not preserved in salt. I also prefer to make my own bone broth (recipe on page 123), chutney, preserved pickles, jams, sauces and mayonnaise.”

What if you don’t have a garden?

Rina says there are many ways to eat better and healthier, even if you aren’t lucky enough to have your own garden from which to harvest. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I know the origin of what I buy to eat?
- What is its carbon footprint? (In other words, am I buying what is in

season and available nearby?)

- Is it my mission to buy South African products?
- Do I read labels and pay attention to all the additives?
- Do I know enough about the health risks associated with some of these additives?
- Do I know what my body needs on a daily basis to function optimally?

From potatoes to heerenbone

The Sandveld on the West Coast is known for its potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) and heerenbone (*Phaseolus lunatus*). Both originally come from South America but do particularly well in the sandy, well-aerated soil of this region.

The story of how the heerenboon, also known as hereboontjie or heerboontjie, became synonymous with the Sandveld is a matter of speculation. It’s believed that the beans arrived at the Cape from Europe to be planted as provisions for the sailors of the Dutch East India Company (best known by its

Buy the beans

Beans for cooking Genuine heerenbone aren’t readily available. You’re most likely to find them at farm stalls, some co-ops, and Spar shops on the West Coast and in the Swartland and Strandveld – sometimes in packets and sometimes by the kilo. We see that Die Bloubakkie in Kleinmond ([f](#) Die Bloubakkie [t](#) 082 695 4281) sells these beans and will deliver countrywide, but the courier costs will probably be more than the beans!

Beans for planting Livingseeds ([livingseeds.co.za/hereboontjies.html](#)) sells *Phaseolus lunatus* seeds in packets of 10 or 25, but we do need to warn readers who don’t live in the Sandveld not to have high expectations.

So many people have told us that these beans will grow elsewhere in the country, but their yield is nothing compared with that of plants that grow in the Sandveld. They like the difficult conditions and the acidic, damp, sandy soil of the area. But then again, we came across this review on the Livingseeds website by Patricia Kruger: “I am totally in love with my hereboontjies. I live 5 km from the very warm Indian Ocean and was completely surprised to see how well the beans grew and how prolifically they produced the loveliest-tasting dry beans. The best is that they just go on and on producing! I will definitely recommend these beans!”

The beans are usually planted in September and harvested in March. As mentioned, they don’t ripen at the same time and are therefore harvested by hand only. Animals love the nutritious dried leaves that remain behind once the pods have been harvested.



Marankies, a type of gourd, thrive in Rina’s garden. There are numerous ways to prepare marankies – in both savoury and sweet dishes. (*Rina served us the most delicious sweet marankie with orange, which tasted almost like sweet potato. – Eds.*)

Dutch acronym the VOC). In 1739, the first trek farmers acquired tenant farms in the Sandveld, and it's quite likely that some of them grew heerenbone.

Before irrigation systems were put in place, this large, flat, kidney-shaped white bean with a black marking was only grown in wetland areas. It is often referred to as our own lima bean, but lima beans don't have that black marking on the hilum – the point of attachment to the seed stalk.

There are several theories about how the bean got its name. One is that, at the Cape in Jan van Riebeeck's time, farmers had to pay over a part of their harvest as a tax to the VOC, hence the name "heerenboon", or "lords' bean", after the Lords XVII, who administered the settlement.

At one time the bean was also called a "goewernewsboontjie", or governor's bean, which possibly referred to Governor Simon van der Stel, to whom the farmers had to pay a tithe based on a percentage of their harvest.

Whatever its origins, the heerenboon of the Sandveld is a truly exceptional legume that deserves a lot more attention. But farming with these beans is labour-intensive, because they do not all ripen at the same time. As soon as the first pods start to

"The leaves, but not the beans, contain microquantities of cyanide – apparently just enough to hold pests at bay."

turn yellow, they can be picked and shelled. The beans are great for use in soups, stews, dips and salads, but it's important to cook them correctly. (See "How to cook heerenbone" on page 119.)

I plant mine as soon as the worst cold and frost have passed in the Leipoldville area, usually in the middle of September but even into October. I train the runners up wire stretched between poles – the taller the poles, the more beans you pick. I simply work in some good home-made compost around the stems and water them occasionally. As a gardener, I find the miracle of these beans is that no insect or bird will dare to eat the leaves, flowers or pods. The leaves, but not the beans, contain microquantities of cyanide – apparently just enough to hold pests at bay.

One of my greatest pleasures is, once the pods start to change



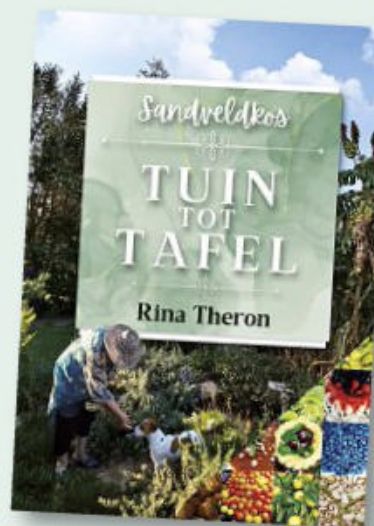
colour, to walk with my basket among the rows and pick them. These plants bear exceptionally well: at the bottom of the plant you pick the ripe yellow pods, in the middle are the large, flat, green pods and at the top of the plant you'll find the tiny cream-coloured flowers.

The perfectly formed beans are glossy white and swollen when I shell them. If I plan to store some, I shell them and leave them in a basket on my kitchen counter until they have dried out completely. Every year, I store some in a large plastic container – enough for an entire year's cooking. Goodness from my own patch of earth. >

Buy the book

In *Sandveldkos: Tuin tot Tafel*, Rina demonstrates the affordable, healthy and tasty dishes you can prepare using ordinary ingredients from your garden and edible plants from the veld. She also wanted to reduce her salt and sugar intake. Just as she did in her first book, *Sandveldkos: Kosnostalgie en Stories van Gister*, she shares interesting facts about the region and the plants with which she experiments, as well as practical advice and tips for the garden and kitchen.

Rina published the book herself and sells it for R410, including courier costs via Paxi. Send an email to rinatheron8@gmail.com to order your copy or visit [f Sandveldkos](#) and [@sandveldkos](#)



Win

We are giving away one autographed copy of *Sandveldkos: Tuin tot Tafel*. Go to platteland.net, click on "Wen" and fill in your details with the keywords "Autumn Rina". The closing date is 26 May 2023.



Heerenboon soup

I grew up in a home where soup and winter were synonymous. On cold winter's nights, with the wood stove sending its welcome heat throughout the house, there was nothing more delicious than a pot of thick legume soup filled with meat and served with Mom's freshly baked bread spread with golden-yellow butter. Dad would always look up when she served extra meat in his soup bowl and say: "Ai, Ouvrou, your soup is very good, but soup feels to me like you're chasing a hungry ox to drink water. Its belly is full but the hunger is still there." Dad was probably remembering the hunger in the concentration camp during World War II – soup was the only food available after a long day of forced labour on the turnip, sugar cane and potato farms.

Serves **12 (generous portions)**
Preparation time **30 minutes**
Cooking time **1 hour**

YOU NEED

- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) butter for frying
- 2 onions, chopped finely
- 2–3 garlic cloves, chopped finely

- 1 smoked pork knuckle
- 2–3 cups (500–750 ml) par-boiled heerenbone
- 3 carrots, chopped finely
- 1–2 l bone broth (recipe opposite)
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) cornflour
- ½ cup (125 ml) milk
- a pinch of ground nutmeg
- 4 rashers streaky bacon, diced

THIS IS HOW

Heat the butter in a saucepan. Fry the onion and garlic until soft and transparent. Add the pork knuckle, par-boiled beans, carrots and bone broth. Cook for about 1 hour, until the meat falls off the bone and the beans are tender.

Mix the cornflour and milk to form a paste and add this to the soup along with the nutmeg. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Fry the bacon cubes in a pan until crisp.

Serve the soup in bowls, topped with crisp bacon pieces and fried garlic bread cubes (see Tip).

Tip Slice leftover bread or rolls into cubes, drizzle olive oil over and grill until golden brown. Rub a garlic clove over each cube.

Heerenboon bread

Makes **1 loaf**
Preparation time **2 hours**
Baking time **40 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 500 g cooked heerenbone
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) olive oil
- 600 g wholewheat bread flour
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) sugar
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) salt
- 1 sachet instant yeast
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) butter
- 1¼ cup (310 ml) lukewarm water

THIS IS HOW

Preheat the oven to 190°C. Place the cooked heerenbone in the bowl of a food processor, pour in the olive oil and pulse to blend thoroughly. Mix the flour, sugar, salt and yeast in a mixing bowl. Add the processed beans.

Melt the butter in the water, then start to mix the bean mixture, slowly working in the buttery water until it forms a soft dough. Knead the dough until it doesn't stick to your hands or the bowl – it should be soft but elastic.

Cover the dough with cling film, then a proving cloth and lastly a blanket. Leave to stand in a warm spot to rise for about 2 hours, until the dough has doubled in size. Knock it back, shape and then let it rise in a loaf pan until the dough forms a ridge above the rim.

Bake the bread for 40 minutes, until it pulls away from the edges of the pan.





Heerboon and bokkom pâté

Serves **10 (with bread)**

Preparation time **10 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 1 cup (250 ml) cooked heerenbone
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove, chopped finely
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) chutney
- 4 tablespoons (60 ml) olive oil
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) finely grated bokkom

THIS IS HOW

In the bowl of a food processor, pulse the cooked heerenbone, lemon juice, garlic and chutney. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil while the machine is running. Lastly, mix in the grated bokkoms. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper just before serving.



Bone broth

I used to get bronchitis with every change of the seasons. During one of my many doctor's visits and a handbag full of cough medication and antibiotics later, the doctor gave me some passing advice: "Cook yourself some power soup." There and then he shot himself in the foot, because that was the last time he saw me for that particular ailment.

The broth needs to simmer for 24 hours, so it's best to use a slow cooker. A pressure cooker would also work, but everything needs to boil together for a long time to extract all the nutritional value from the bones. It can simply stand there simmering, receptive to all the bits and pieces in the vegetable drawer that have been waiting for their true purpose.

Makes **5 l**

Preparation time **30 minutes**

Cooking time **24 hours to extract the collagen from the bones plus 40 minutes to cook and blend the vegetables**

YOU NEED

- 2 kg marrow bones, sawn into rings (or use 2 kg chicken carcasses or 2 kg fish heads and bones)
- 5 l hot water
- ¼ cup (62,5 ml) organic apple cider vinegar or grape vinegar
- a pinch of salt

- fresh thyme sprigs, sage leaves, bay leaves, allspice and whole peppercorns
- 1 bunch young carrots, chopped roughly
- 1 celery stem with leaves, chopped roughly
- 1 bunch of flat-leaf parsley with stems, chopped roughly
- 1–2 onions, chopped roughly
- 3–4 garlic cloves, chopped finely
- 4 turnips, cubed (optional)
- 4–6 leeks, chopped finely
- 5 wild garlic stems, spring onions or shallots with fronds, coarsely chopped
- any other vegetable bits such as cabbage cores, sweet-potato tops and broccoli leaves

THIS IS HOW

Cook the bones with the water, vinegar, seasoning and aromatics in a slow cooker for at least 24 hours to extract all the nutritional value. Scrape out the marrow and remove the bones from the broth.

Allow the broth to cool, then chill it in the fridge so that the fat can set on top. Remove the layer of fat and freeze some broth for future use.

Add all the vegetables and simmer for about 1 hour, until the vegetables are tender. Either blend the veg for a thick winter soup, or leave them chunky. The soup also freezes well. >



Fragrant sweet-potato ribbons

Serves 2

Preparation time 10 minutes

Cooking time 5 minutes

YOU NEED

- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) olive oil
- 1 onion, sliced into rings
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped finely
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled into long strips
- 1 medium Granny Smith apple, halved, core removed and sliced into thin strips, peel and all
- a pinch each of nutmeg and cinnamon

THIS IS HOW

Heat the oil and stir-fry the onion and garlic until transparent. Alternate adding strips of sweet potato and apple, stir-frying continuously. Season with nutmeg and cinnamon.



Sweet-potato ribbons

Serves 4–5

Preparation time 10 minutes

Cooking time 15 minutes

YOU NEED

- 3 cardamom pods, seeds scraped out
- ½ teaspoon (2,5 ml) whole fennel seeds
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) butter (or olive oil)
- 3 sweet potatoes, peeled into long strips

THIS IS HOW

Toast the spices in a pan to allow the flavours to develop. Add the butter or olive oil. Slowly add the sweet potato strips. Stir-fry until golden and crunchy.



Curried meatballs with bacon

I discovered this recipe in my mother-in-law's tattered old recipe book. I made a few tweaks and now it's one of my most dependable recipes. The secret lies in the slow stewing process once the meatballs are beautifully brown on both sides.

Makes 15–20 meatballs

Preparation time 30 minutes plus

1 hour to chill in the fridge

Cooking time 20 minutes in a frying pan or 30 minutes in the oven

YOU NEED

- olive oil for frying
- ¾ cup (180 ml) onion, chopped finely
- 2–3 garlic cloves, chopped finely
- 1 kg beef or ostrich mince
- ¼ cup (60 ml) wheatgerm or oat bran
- ½ cup (125 ml) shredded streaky bacon
- 2 medium potatoes or one small sweet potato, grated and liquid reserved
- ¼ cup apricot-and marankie chutney (or regular apricot chutney)
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) curry powder
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) turmeric

- 2 eggs, beaten

- ¼ cup (60 ml) chicken stock

THIS IS HOW

Heat the olive oil and fry the onion and garlic until transparent. Add the onion mixture to the mince in a separate bowl. Mix in the remaining ingredients, except the stock, and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. Use your hands to shape the mixture into meatballs. Place them in the fridge to chill for about 1 hour.

Add more olive oil to the pan and fry the meatballs until browned all around. Pour the stock over the meatballs, cover the pan with a lid and cook for 10 minutes or longer, until most of the liquid has evaporated. The meatballs are equally tasty served warm or cold.

Variation 1: Wrap the raw meatballs in bacon rashers and roast them in the oven (at 160°C) for about 30 minutes. Spoon the delicious pan juices over the meatballs and serve.

Variation 2: Add 2 teaspoons (10 ml) psyllium husk powder to the meatball mixture to act as a binder.



Spekboom cake

A friend discovered this interesting recipe. What a massive surprise to be able to bake finely chopped spekboom leaves from my garden into a cake – I'm always excited when I can cook or bake with as many healthy local ingredients as possible. The pecan nuts come from two old trees in my orchard, the raisins on stems from Vredendal, the eggs from a friend's chicken harem, and I use Eureka Mills stone-ground flour.

Serves **20**

Preparation time **30 minutes**

Baking time **1 hour**

YOU NEED

FOR THE CAKE

- 3 large eggs
- 1 cup (250 ml) canola or sunflower oil
- 2 cups (500 ml) brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons (45 ml) milk
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla extract
- 2 cups (500 ml) cake wheat flour, sifted
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) baking powder
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) bicarbonate of soda
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) salt



- a handful of raisins
- a handful of chopped nuts
- 2 cups (500 ml) chopped spekboom leaves, plus extra for garnishing

FOR THE ICING

- 5 tablespoons (75 ml) softened butter
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vanilla extract
- 1 cup (250 ml) icing sugar, sifted
- ¾ tub cottage cheese (or cream cheese mixed with 1 tablespoon lemon juice)
- ¼ cup chopped spekboom leaves

THIS IS HOW

Preheat the oven to 160°C and grease a ring cake pan.

Beat the eggs, oil and sugar until creamy. Stir in the milk and vanilla. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and salt. Add the egg mixture and stir. Fold in the raisins, nuts and spekboom leaves and pour the mixture into the greased cake pan. Bake in the oven for 1 hour or until a knife inserted in the centre comes out clean. Turn out the cake onto a wire rack and leave to cool.

Make the icing Beat the butter, vanilla and icing sugar until light and creamy. Stir in the cottage cheese and chopped spekboom leaves. Spread a layer of icing over the cooled cake and decorate it with spekboom leaves. **P**

FROM NIC'S KITCHEN

The heart of autumn

Chef and TV cooking programme judge Nic van Wyk's first cookbook, *Brood & Botter: 'n Lewe van Kook*, features his favourite family recipes, restaurant dishes and soul food. *Platteland* compiled a dinner menu from his book.

TEXT AND RECIPES **NIC VAN WYK** PHOTOS **DONNA LEWIS**
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND FOOD STYLIST **HANNES KOEGELENBERG**



Menu

*Choose as many dishes as you
like and serve them in any
order, or all together:*

Bread, butter and fatty biltong

Chicken croquettes with
corn and truffle sauce

Mussels with chorizo and cream

Deep-fried curried calamari
with avocado and aioli

Arancini

Brinjal with a twist

- DESSERT -

Hazelnut crème brûlée with
caramelised pears





Bread, butter and fatty biltong

Your doctor might not approve of this recipe... It's best enjoyed as an occasional treat, especially if you're health-conscious. You can bake your own white bread or use a shop-bought loaf of unsliced white bread – you'll have to cut 2cm-thick slices at home.

Use salted farm butter that has softened. The biltong should contain yellow fat, and should not be too moist or too dry. Spread a generous amount of butter on the bread, cover the entire surface with biltong slices, and enjoy every bite without a morsel of guilt.

Chicken croquettes with corn and truffle sauce

My wife says I am quite fussy when it comes to leftovers, but some foods do indeed taste better the following day. Leftover chicken is one of them. The sauce for the croquettes does take a while to prepare, but the flavour is heavenly.

Serves 4

Preparation time **15–20 minutes, plus about 20 minutes to chill in the fridge**

Cooking time **about 1 hour**

YOU NEED

FOR THE CORN AND TRUFFLE SAUCE

- 4 large corn cobs
- ½ garlic clove, grated finely
- 2 cups (500 ml) cream
- 150 g butter, cubed
- fine salt and ground white pepper
- 25 ml white truffle oil (buy a small bottle for a few special dishes)
- juice of 1 lemon

FOR THE CROQUETTES

- 250 g leftover chicken meat, chopped finely
- 150 g baby marrows, grated
- 50 g spring onions, plus extra for garnishing, chopped finely
- 6 eggs
- 250 g cake wheat flour
- 250 g breadcrumbs
- canola oil, for deep-frying

THIS IS HOW

Make the sauce Boil the corn cobs for 20 minutes in water to which you have added some salt and sugar. Remove them from the water and use a sharp knife to slice off the kernels. Set aside a few tablespoonfuls of corn kernels.

Cook the remaining kernels with the garlic and cream for 10–15 minutes. Place the mixture in the bowl of a food processor and purée it. Work the

purée through a fine sieve to produce a smooth sauce. Pour the sauce into a clean saucepan, bring it to the boil, then pulse it using a stick blender. Slowly add the butter, stir, and season the sauce with white pepper, truffle oil, lemon juice and a little more salt. Remove the sauce from the heat and set it aside.

Make the croquettes Place the chicken, baby marrow and spring onion in a mixing bowl, add 2 eggs and 3 tablespoons flour, and mix thoroughly – you should be able to form oval-shaped croquettes, each about 50 g, using your hands. Place

the croquettes in the fridge to chill for about 20 minutes to firm up.

Beat the remaining 4 eggs in a shallow bowl. Place the rest of the flour and the breadcrumbs in separate shallow bowls.

Remove the croquettes from the fridge. Roll them in the flour first, then in the beaten egg and then in the breadcrumbs. Repeat.

Heat the oil to 160°C and deep-fry the croquettes until crisp and brown.

Serve Arrange the croquettes in four serving bowls, and carefully pour in some sauce. Garnish with reserved corn kernels and spring onion. >



Mussels with chorizo and cream

These days, fresh mussels are widely available. Try to get hold of the freshest mussels possible for this dish to guarantee a deliciously flavourful sauce.

Serves 4

Preparation time **10 minutes**

Cooking time **15 minutes**

YOU NEED

- canola oil, for frying
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 onion, chopped roughly
- 200 ml white wine
- 1 kg fresh mussels, cleaned
- 500 ml cream
- 400 g chorizo (Spanish sausage), sliced into thin rounds
- 25 g smoked paprika
- fine salt
- 100 g flat-leaf parsley, chopped roughly, for garnishing
- warm bread, for serving

THIS IS HOW

Place a large saucepan – one with a lid – on the stove. Fry 2 roughly chopped garlic cloves and the onion in a little oil for 2 minutes – you want the garlic to be warm, but it shouldn't brown.

When the saucepan is very hot, add the wine. Allow the alcohol to evaporate and the liquid to reduce by half, then add the mussels. Stir to mix, then cover the pot with the lid and steam the mussels for 5–6 minutes. Inspect the mussels closely: once they've opened, they are done. Discard any that haven't opened. Drain the mussels over a fine sieve, reserving the cooking liquid.

Pour 100 ml of the cooking liquid into a medium-sized saucepan. Add the cream and simmer until the liquid has reduced by half. Taste and add a little more cooking liquid for extra mussel flavour, then remove from the heat.

Fry the chorizo for 2–3 minutes in a little oil in a large pan, just to heat it through – once the chorizo starts to release oil and fat, it's ready. Grate the remaining 2 garlic cloves using

a Microplane grater and add to the pan, followed by the cooked mussels and paprika. Stir, add the reduced cream mixture and stir once more. The mussels probably won't need salt, but you can adjust the seasoning to taste if you like.

Divide the mussels among four deep bowls, adding plenty of sauce, and garnish with parsley. Serve with warm bread to mop up every last dribble of sauce.

Clean the mussels well

Remove the beards and get rid of any debris, sand or seaweed on the shells. Scrub the mussels with the rough side of a new kitchen sponge. Never eat mussels with seaweed on them or mussels that haven't opened during the cooking process.



Deep-fried curried calamari with avocado and aioli

The first time I ate the tentacles and tubes of baby calamari was when Ocean Basket opened at Menlyn Park in Pretoria. Over the years I got to know it in restaurants as calamari from the Falkland Islands (Patagonian squid), and it became the seafood I served most frequently on my menus. It's versatile and can be used for everything from snacks to a main course.

Serves **4**

Preparation time **15 minutes**

Cooking time **3–4 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 100 g cake wheat flour
- 50 g medium curry powder
- 320 g calamari (tubes and tentacles), cleaned
- canola oil, for deep-frying
- 1 avocado
- juice of ½ a lemon
- 100 ml aioli (recipe on the right)

THIS IS HOW

Combine the flour and curry powder and season it with fine salt and freshly milled black pepper. Ensure that the calamari is completely dry and slice the tubes into rings about 1 cm thick. Mix all the calamari into the flour – there will be some flour left over, but that's fine.

Heat the oil to 160°C in a deep saucepan or deep-fryer and fry the calamari for 3–4 minutes, until crisp and brown, taking care not to let it burn. Remove the calamari from the oil and drain it on paper towel.

Peel the avocado, slice it into small cubes and season well with salt, pepper and lemon juice. Mash the avocado more, as you would for guacamole.

Place the aioli in a squeeze bottle and pipe a few circles onto four plates. Dot the mashed avocado in between and arrange the calamari on the plates.



Make your own aioli

Juice 1 lemon, use a Microplane grater to grate 1 large peeled garlic clove finely, and measure out 400 ml canola oil. Beat 3 egg yolks, 1 tablespoon (15 ml) white wine vinegar and 1 tablespoon (5 ml) Dijon mustard in a glass or metal bowl. Continue beating until the mixture turns white. Gradually beat 200 ml of the canola oil into the egg mixture, followed by half the lemon juice and the garlic (this will lend it a looser consistency). Now gradually beat in the remaining 200 ml oil until incorporated, lastly adding the remaining lemon juice, until you have a smooth white mayonnaise. Season with a little salt and store in an airtight container in the fridge, where it will keep for up to 1 week. >

Arancini

You can make a whole new meal from leftover risotto. Roll the rice into balls, add a filling, coat the balls with breadcrumbs and then deep-fry them. The arancini filling below is just a suggestion – you can use any kind of filling, but a cheese that melts well is essential.

Serves **5 as a starter**

Preparation time **15 minutes, plus about 30 minutes to chill in the fridge**

Cooking time **3–4 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 500 g cooked risotto rice
- 250 g mozzarella cheese, grated
- 200 g sun-dried tomato pesto
- 100 g spring onions, chopped finely
- 150 g cake wheat flour
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 400 g white breadcrumbs
- canola oil, for deep-frying
- aioli (recipe on previous page)

THIS IS HOW

Shape the rice into balls weighing about 50 g. Gently make an indentation in the centre of each ball and add a spoonful of mozzarella, tomato pesto and spring onion – be sure not to overfill it. Then wrap the rice around the filling to seal completely.

Place the flour, egg and breadcrumbs in three separate shallow bowls. Roll the filled rice balls first in the flour, then in the egg and lastly in the breadcrumbs. Place in the fridge to chill for about 30 minutes.

Heat the oil to 160°C in a saucepan or deep-fryer and fry the rice balls until crisp and golden brown. Drain them on kitchen paper. Serve the arancini as is or with a little aioli.





Brinjal with a twist

I use a combination of Asian ingredients to give brinjal a flavour boost. It's worth buying the ingredients for the Asian sauce if you don't have them in your pantry yet – the sauce can be used in a variety of dishes.

Serves **4 as a starter**

Preparation time **15 minutes**

Cooking time **35 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 2 small brinjals, halved lengthwise
- canola oil, for drizzling
- 100 g soft goat's milk cheese, crumbled
- 30 g crispy onion sprinkles, for garnishing
- 4 spring onions, chopped finely

FOR THE ASIAN SAUCE

- 50 ml sweet Indonesian soya sauce
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) regular soya sauce
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) lime or lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) mirin (Japanese rice wine) or rice wine vinegar
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) fish sauce
- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) chilli sauce

THIS IS HOW

Heat the oven to 200°C. Make diamond-shaped incisions in each brinjal half (don't slice right through the skin) and arrange them cut side up on an oven tray. Season with fine salt and freshly milled black pepper, and drizzle with oil. Roast the brinjals for 30 minutes or until tender and brown.

Make the sauce Meanwhile, combine all the sauce ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Brush some sauce on the hot brinjal halves, and return them to the oven to heat through for 2–3 minutes.

Serve Arrange the brinjal halves on four plates and pour the rest of the sauce over. Top with crumbled goat's cheese, crispy onion sprinkles and spring onion. >

Meet the chef

Nic van Wyk is a well-known chef, restaurateur, and TV presenter and judge. Two of his culinary heroes are British food journalist Nigel Slater, who has several recipe books and food memoirs to his name and whose speciality is vegetables and fruit; and the Australian food editor and cookbook author Donna Hay, known for her focus on basic ingredients and simple preparation. Good, honest food – that's what Nic enjoys.



Hazelnut crème brûlée with caramelised pears

The traditional baked custard dessert with a brittle top of melted sugar will always remain a favourite. I've adapted the recipes to give it some pizzazz – you'll want to eat every delicious mouthful to get to the surprise at the bottom of the bowl.

Serves 8

Preparation time **20 minutes**

Baking time **50 minutes**

YOU NEED

- 2 large pears, peeled and sliced into 1 cm cubes
- 250 g white sugar, plus extra for the topping
- 100 g butter
- 2 cups (500 ml) milk
- 2 cups (500 ml) cream
- 10 egg yolks
- 100 ml Frangelico (hazelnut liqueur)

THIS IS HOW

Place the pears, 150 g of the sugar and the butter in a saucepan and allow it to come to the boil over moderate heat, stirring regularly, until the mixture has browned and caramelised – this will take about 20 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat and set it aside to cool.

In another saucepan, heat the milk and cream. Preheat the oven to 140°C.

Beat the egg yolks and remaining 100 g sugar until the mixture starts to turn white. Add a little of the warm milk mixture and stir thoroughly before adding the egg mixture to the rest of the milk mixture in the saucepan. Add the liqueur and stir to mix thoroughly. Place 8 round bowls (10 cm x 5 cm) on a work surface and place a tablespoonful of caramelised pear in each one. Then fill the bowls with the custard mixture.

Fill a suitably sized oven dish with enough warm water so the water level almost reaches the rim of the bowls when you place them in the dish. Then carefully place the oven dish in the oven.



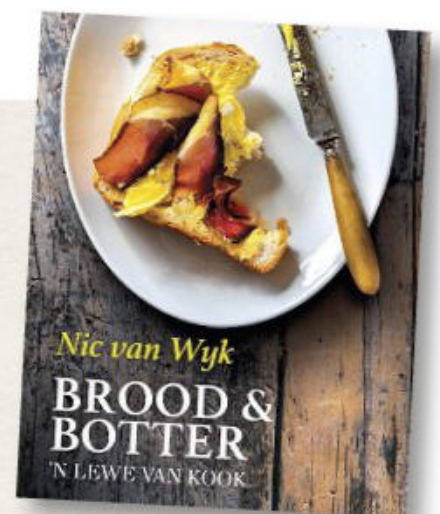
Bake the custard for 30 minutes or until done – it should still be jiggly when you gently shake a bowl – then remove the dish from the oven. Allow the custard to cool in the water, then remove the bowls to cool completely.

When you're ready to serve the dessert, sprinkle a thin layer of sugar on top of the custard. Use a blowtorch to melt and caramelize the sugar so it turns a dark caramel colour. Allow it to stand for a couple of minutes before serving. **P**

Buy the book

In his first cookbook, Nic van Wyk looks back on the dishes he has eaten over the years, who prepared it, what he remembers most fondly, and what this has meant to him. The recipes reflect his 21-year journey in food – his culinary coming of age, as it were. Dishes are prepared according to classic methods using basic techniques, yet Nic always takes it a step further. The section “*Onthoukos*” focuses on the food of his childhood; “*Restaurantkos*” represents his growth as a chef, and “*Hartkos: Mondig en vorentoe*” includes his proverbial last meal: a fried farmyard egg on toast. The book is published by Human & Rousseau and costs about R425.

nb.co.za 021 406 3033



Win We are giving away three copies of *Brood & Botter*. Go to platteland.net, click on “Wen” and fill in your details with the keywords “Herfs Nic”. The closing date is 26 May 2023.



Nutty & nice

Nutrient-dense, flavourful and versatile, nuts are in season this time of year. Let them shine on your autumn table by trying Ina Paarman's vegetarian bobotie, which her family prefers over the meaty version! This recipe is from her new book *My Favourite Recipes*.

Macadamia nut bobotie

I chose to use macadamia nuts in this dish for their lovely flavour and crunch, and because they're a more affordable option.

Serves 8

Preparation time **20 minutes**

Cooking time **20 minutes**

YOU NEED

FOR THE BOBOTIE

- 2 slices of bread, cut into small cubes
- 1 x 200 ml Ina Paarman's Tikka Curry Coat & Cook Sauce
- 3 onions, chopped
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) Ina Paarman's Green Onion Seasoning
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) canola oil
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) butter
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 cup (250 ml) grated carrots
- 1 apple, grated unpeeled
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) grated fresh ginger
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) Ina Paarman's Masala Spice
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) lemon juice or vinegar
- 1½ cups (150 g) macadamia nuts, chopped in a food processor until it is reasonably fine but still has some texture
- 3–4 lemon leaves

FOR THE TOPPING

- 1 cup (250 ml) sour cream or buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) Ina Paarman's Masala Spice

THIS IS HOW

Adjust the oven rack to the centre position and preheat the oven to 180°C. Place the bread cubes on a plate and pour the Tikka Curry Coat & Cook Sauce over; mix and allow to soak.

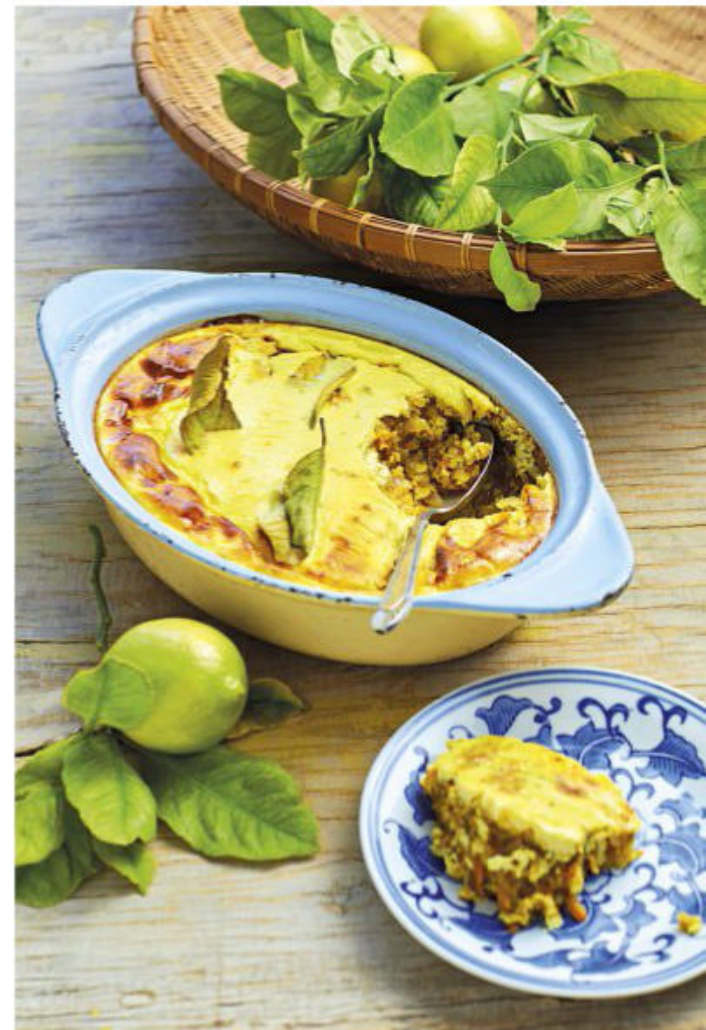
Season the onions with Green Onion Seasoning and stir-fry gently in a mixture of canola oil and butter. Cover the onions with baking paper and braise on the lowest setting of the stove plate for about 12 minutes. Add the garlic, carrots, apple and ginger, turn up the heat and stir-fry for 2 minutes.

Add the Masala Spice and lemon juice. Add the nuts and stir-fry for another 1–2 minutes.

Mash the bread with a fork and add to the nut mixture. Stir until well combined.

Spoon the mixture into an ovenproof dish and level the top. Tuck lemon leaves here and there into the surface.

Beat the topping ingredients and pour it over the bobotie. Bake in the hot oven for 35–40 minutes or until golden brown and puffy.



Serve the bobotie with lentil rice (recipe available on paarman.co.za) and sambals such as grated apple mixed with a little finely chopped onion, sultanas and honey. Banana slices mixed with yoghurt and a little Masala Spice are also delicious.



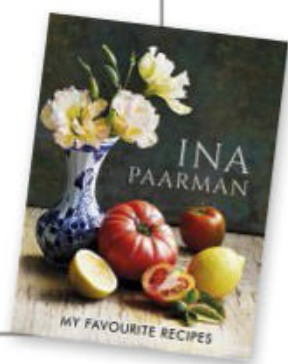
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At the sound of the bell

Now that the Post Office is done for, you will see, even out in the sticks, couriers delivering everything from groceries and documents to lounge suites and live chickens. We've come to rely on it. But, as **Johan van Zyl** discovered, this service also has the ability to turn a platteland resident into Pavlov's grumpiest dog.

ILLUSTRATION DIEK GROBLER

I can no longer remember how old I was when we learnt about Pavlov's dog in school, but it must have been some time in the early '80s, when I was still dreaming of a career in the circus.

Fortunately, the first set of scales fell from my eyes at one of Boswell-Wilkie's biennial visits to Namaqualand. Would you believe, the flamboyant Madame Zabarovska with her eight acrobatic French poodles was one and the same person as Lulu the dumbest clown, and the tannie with the greasy hair behind the counter at the popcorn machine! The lesson I learnt that day: I would have to work on my repertoire if I ever wanted to make the shortlist for chief clown. At the circus you dared not hide any talent under a bushel.

At about the same time as my first career-related trauma in primary school, I heard about Pavlov's experiments with dogs for the first time, probably the most famous example of classical conditioning. My imagination ran wild. With this knowledge – and the tricks I was planning to teach Tannie Kotie's two lazy beagles with the help of bells and biltong – I would soon run rings around Madame Zabarovska and her troupe of gifted poodles.

In those days I did not fully understand what Pavlov's experiments truly meant, but today you can't tell me anything about his theory that I don't already know.



Since couriers have taken over deliveries in South Africa, I myself have become one of Pavlov's dogs. (Pardon me, the bell is ringing; it's Courier Guy; let me quickly put on my bib and go fetch my package.)

MUCH LIKE FLIES on the turd that Madame Zabarovska's smartest poodle dropped on the top step of the tower on which they performed their tricks one evening (to the great amusement of the spectators), the couriers descend upon us. Not only do we buy everything online that used to require a trip to town, but I also receive a constant stream of books from publishing houses for my work as a newspaper books

editor. The complications around all these deliveries present the sort of challenge that in Biblical times would make people rend their garments and cast ashes upon their heads.

One afternoon, this situation caused me to stand at our front gate, lips retracted in a snarl, growling and eventually barking like a badly antagonised Rottweiler. At a courier, would you believe it.

Couriers do not have an easy time of it in our village. In the first place, the houses don't have street numbers – at the municipality, everything works according to erf numbers. Some residents display their erf number outside, but you try

to explain to a courier why numbers 6 and 538 Hoopvol Street are right next door to each other.

In the second place, because our home and office are at the same address, we rarely have time during the day to entertain unexpected guests or beggars, so we keep our gates locked. That means couriers cannot knock on the door; they have to phone us. But in our thick-walled old house there is, on top of everything else, hardly any cellphone signal. There's one spot in the kitchen where you sometimes get two bars, so that's where we leave our cellphones lying, especially when we're expecting a delivery. But the couriers rarely call, because, "Sorry, I don't have airtime."

Okay, fine, so we came to an agreement: they would toot loudly outside our house when they had a parcel for us. But they needed to be patient, because...

Because – and now I sigh like an old dog that really doesn't feel like eating dry pellets – when I'm in the study and I hear that bell – sorry, car horn – I don't waste any time drooling before I set off on a 60m sprint: I jump up from my desk in the middle of the house, race down the passage and through the dining-room-lounge-kitchen and pantry, out the back door, across the back stoep, left around the house and garage to the front stoep, because this is much faster than opening the front door with its four shutters, one regular lock and two heavy crossbars. Alright then.

Within weeks, my ears had been fine-tuned to the nuances of every toot. First, I learnt to differentiate when a delivery vehicle was possibly tooting outside the spaza shop diagonally opposite our house, and in time I became acquainted

with the cheeky, almost quick-tempered toot of the Courier Guy vehicles as opposed to the duller honking of the Intertown Transport van. Aramex and Dawn Wing both blare like a bugle; DHL's yellow vans sound like a soprano missing the high note and then leaving the stage sobbing.

Just when I thought I had it all figured out, the most wonderful new neighbours moved in across the street. The only negative thing I have to say about them is that the woman in particular is a veteran online shopper, so my ears now have to detect whether a courier is tooting outside our house or outside theirs. I frequently do the dash out of and around the house with no prize at the end, but at least this means that one of my belly rolls might eventually disappear.

ONE AFTERNOON I heard an insistent double-toot that sounded like Courier Guy, although they didn't normally deliver parcels that late in the afternoon. I had since learnt to peer through the peephole in the barred front door first before completing the rest of my sprint through and around the house. But in summer our cascading wisteria blocks the view. Yes indeed, I could see the nose of Courier Guy's white bakkie. I was scarcely out of the back door before there was another toot. My word, I thought, be patient!

From the front stoep I could see that the driver's door was wide open and that the driver was standing outside the bakkie bent over and leaning inside over the seat as if casting about for a parcel in the footwell and on the passenger side. I silently practised my little speech about showing patience when delivering parcels at our house.

He straightened up, noticed me,

gave a friendly wave and gestured that he would be with me shortly. I didn't recognise the driver; he had to be new.

"Hello," I said.

"Damn," said the man. "I think I left my phone somewhere and now I can't find it anywhere." He searched and rifled through the clutter in the bakkie once more. As my patience slowly evaporated, he said: "Ag, would you please just give me a missed call... perhaps my phone is still in the vehicle."

I may have growled under my breath, but I ran to the kitchen, got my phone and jogged back. I asked him for his number. And indeed, his phone rang inside the bakkie.

"Ah, there it is! I just *knew* it was here! Thank you so much. Thank you."

The man ferreted among the stuff in his bakkie a little more while I waited for him to give me my parcel. I was now at the front gate, getting blood-thirsty and showing teeth. "Do you realise how unprofessional you are? I've been waiting for almost 10 minutes to receive my bloody parcel and, unlike you, I don't have the whole day to waste. Just give me my \$\$\$#@!! parcel and go!"

The man looked at me with a frown. "What parcel?"

"My courier parcel!"

"I'm not a courier," he said.

"Then why the \$\$\$#@ did you stop in front of my house and hoot? Twice!"

"I didn't."

"Yes, you did."

"No, I didn't. I just stopped outside your house and you came out and stared at me, so I asked you if you could give me a buzz."

"YOU \$\$\$#@!! TOOTED OUTSIDE MY \$\$\$#@!! DOOR!" By now I was growling and foaming at the mouth.

"I also heard it," he said and quickly got back into his bakkie, like someone who wasn't keen on having to get a tetanus shot. "It was the SAB truck at the bottle store over there." **P**

"Couriers do not have an easy time of it in our village. In the first place, the houses don't have street numbers."

The year 2020

Covid-19 is still around, but at least we've become used to living with the threat of the virus. **Werner Esterhuyse** from Johannesburg recalls the early days of the pandemic and how he found respite in a road trip.

– Joubert's Pass, Eastern Cape –

The Covid-19 pandemic taught me a few things, of which the most important is surely that life can take

a 180-degree turn – you think you have your plans all laid out, and tomorrow everything has been upended.

I decided to drive Joubert's Pass between Lady Grey and Barkly East again, because I knew that spectacular views await at the top of the pass, in either direction, at the sign that reads "Hemel-op-Aarde". I wanted to take another photograph

of this view, and one of a cross on a farm about which travel writer Willem van der Berg had written in a previous issue of *Platteland*.

I call this photo my "twenty-twenty", referring to the year 2020, when the pandemic turned our world on its head. **P**

Show us your happy place and win!

We invite you to share your favourite 180° view somewhere far from the city buzz. Send your high-resolution photographs (300 dpi, minimum 1 MB) via email with the phrase "180 degrees" in the subject line and a 200-word description of this special place to  helloplatteland@gmail.com

*The reader whose photo and story we publish wins a subscription to an online photography course, "Take better photos", worth R950, offered by our sister magazine go! Congratulations to **Werner Esterhuyse** from Walkerville, Johannesburg.*

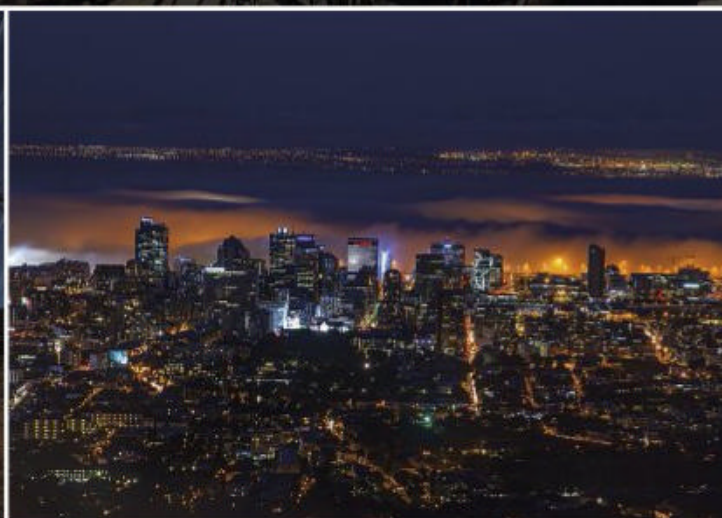


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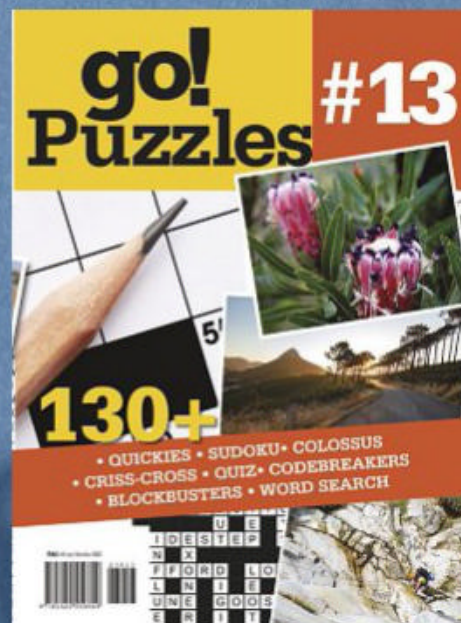
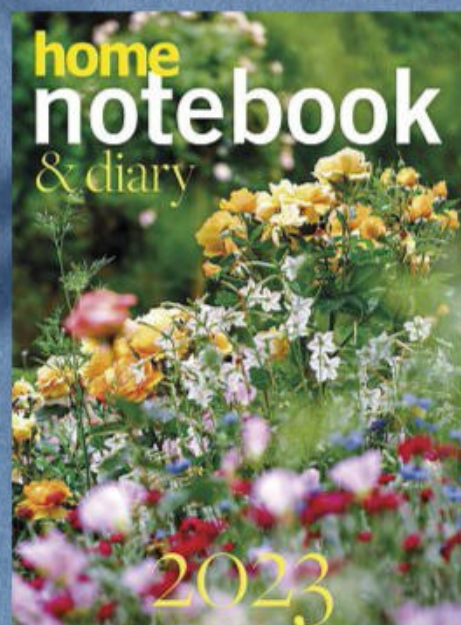
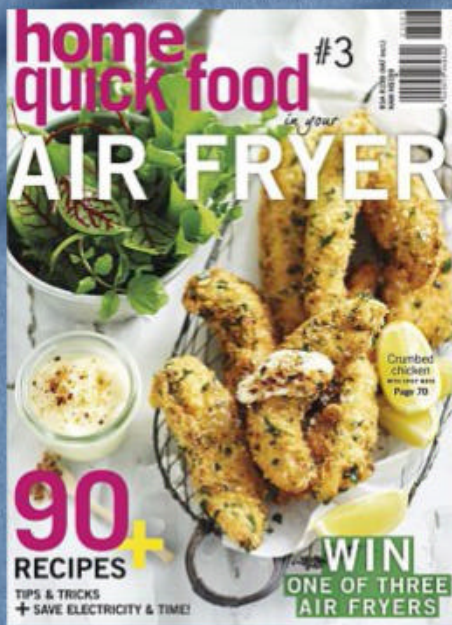
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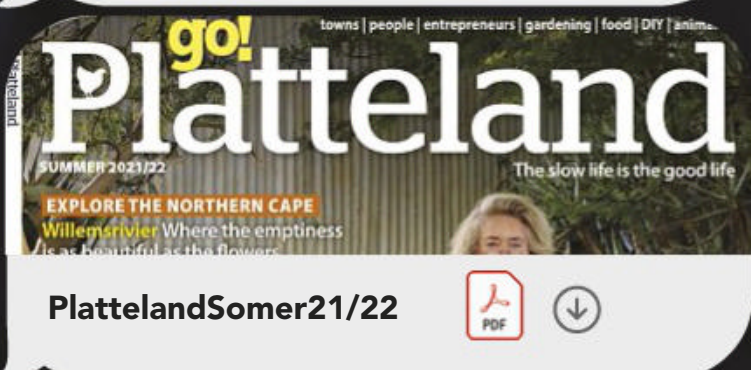
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