

Summery flights of fancy at Catharina's

By Leigh Andrews

11 Jan 2017

Catharina's at Steenberg Estate is serving a summery food-and-wine flight option, perfect for those looking for neither a filling lunch nor dinner but rather something in between – “elevensies in the afternoon,” if you will.

Each flight pairs a flute of bubbly, white and red from Steenberg Estate with moreish morsels that enhance their flavour, guaranteeing you'll linger on the elegant grounds soaking up the sights and tastes for a good few hours. Don't take that as a veiled passive-aggressive comment on the service as it's truly outstanding, with plates whizzed away once wiped clean with sides of bread (yes really, I'm that person) and glasses refilled as soon as their levels dip. That's just what happened on a sunny day at the end of the festive season, when we opted to sit beneath an umbrella that was in turn beneath a towering oak tree, with a soothing breeze a balm to the summer heat that multitasked by also lifting scent from the surrounding jasmine bushes to softly dance around us. Doesn't that sound dreamy? Sitting at my desk right now, with deadlines looming as I think back to that afternoon with much longing, I can confirm it was! Here's why...



Savoury flight 1.

There are two savoury flights and one sweet option, each comprising three starter portions. Ably assisted by John on the wines, we heard that the flights are meant to be taken as small meals post-brunch, or what I refer to as a light “lupper”: that stopgap between lunch and dinner. As we hadn't had lunch, we took that as a sign to sample all three.

Striking savoury flavours

The first savoury option includes a nutty salad of smoked salmon slivers, crumbly feta and crunchy walnuts with an orange-cardamom dressing paired with the Steenberg sparkling Sauvignon Blanc, a sparkly bubbly that's fun and fruity with passion fruit, litchi and pineapple flavours to neutralise the acidity of the food. The second pairing in the flight is the pan-fried line fish with lemony *creme fraiche* on herbed baby blini with blobs of red and black caviar, freshly paired with the Steenberg Semillon 2014. This pours pale with translucent edges and a woody hop that tastes of creamy nettle, lime and apricot. The last pairing in this flight is the confit duck leg resting in a mushroomed celeriac and truffle purée, with pops of soft white bean, celeriac and apple cubes that pair well with the Steenberg Echo 2013. Described as an entry level, rich Bordeaux-style blend, it has a buttery mulberry tang that's replaced with spicy star anise and spearmint. It's outstanding.



Savoury flight 2.

The other savoury flight includes a quail and bacon *boudin* on cos lettuce with white anchovy and Caesar dressing – with no quail in the kitchen on the day, this was substituted with a beetrooty, Melba toast-accompanied round of rabbit that paired with the Steenberg 1682 Sparkling Chardonnay MCC. It's a fresh, pale-lemon bubbly with notes of Granny Smith apple and white peach, my favourite glass of the day. The flight's next pairing is seared salmon-wrapped tuna on a grassy pea purée, with pear and dill washed down with the Steenberg Premium Sauvignon Blanc 2015. This white wine has green notes of gooseberry, lime blossom and white grapefruit and is just the thing to feel summery inside and out. The last pairing in this flight is the beef tartare with rosy cabbage slaw and grilled gherkin slice, paired with the Steenberg Nebbiolo 2013. A marvel on the eye and the tongue, this is a garnet red with amber flashes and notes of rose petal and wild herbs as well as smoky hints of sour cherry, raspberry and hibiscus tea that John cautioned is best with food.

Colour palette- and taste palate-pleasing

Following all those savoury flavours we were ready for the sweet dessert flight. First up is a strawberry macaron served shot glass-style, with porcelain-white meringue shards and jammy jelly that pairs with the palest pink Steenberg 1682 Sparkling Pinot Noir, a shimmery bubbly with fynbos and strawberry flavours that thoroughly enhance the dessert. The second serving is [Chef Archie Maclean's acclaimed](#) fluffy lemon posset with tart ginger-beer ice cream and lemon-honey cake crumb, paired with the slightly wooded, acidic Sphinx Chardonnay 2016. This white wine has nuances of quince and pear and tastes slightly sweeter when sipped around spoonfuls of the dessert. Last on the list is the *piece de resistance*: Chocolate ganache and rich cocoa mousse, cubes of mango-passion fruit purée and a silky violet *sabayon*, paired with the ruby Steenberg Catharina 1682. This is truly top-of-the-range, made from three red fruits: Shiraz, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, and also seems a smidgeon sweeter when swirled with those dense, dark bitter chocolate flavours.



Dessert flight.

Perhaps it was the strong wind or the heat of the day, but we left Steenberg Estate slightly disappointed at once again not hearing a hoot from the Spotted Eagle Owl family Catharina's is [known for](#). Our hostess confirmed she'd seen them swooping around the previous evening, so perhaps we'll finally spot them next time.

**Leigh Andrews was a guest of Catharina's at Steenberg Estate. Both savoury flight options are R275 while the sweet flight costs R250, and all are available daily from noon to 5pm. For bookings, contact +27 (0)21 713 7178 or email reservations@catharinastaurant.co.za and follow Catharina's [@CatharinastR](#) on Twitter or Steenberg Estate on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). For a reminder of Andrews' review of Catharina's wild menu, [click here](#).*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh Andrews.

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