



# Spoilt for choice

Durban is renowned amongst the locals for its fabulous curries and from the satisfying “bunny chow” (the inside of a loaf of bread is scraped out and replaced with curry) to the more sophisticated prawn curries – they must be tasted. However Durban also offers several trendy and fine dining restaurants - Tracy Gielink introduces three of the best.

## Kashmir

Durban has the largest Indian population outside of India, and this eastern influence has pervaded local dining. Sometimes its presence is a mere flirtation and on other occasions it's all-consuming. As the name suggests, Kashmir is uncompromising in its devotion.

A staircase swathed in Persian carpets sweeps you into a reception area where a richly embellished look is summed up by a single word: opulent. A wooden dresser is covered in small bowls displaying an array of spices that, in various combinations, make up the intricate gravies that you are on the brink of discovering. The interior boasts dark wooden chairs, crisp table cloths and is hugged by wraparound windows, otherwise take things down a notch on the covered balcony. The décor here is more relaxed and you have a vantage point of the nearby Indian Ocean. Thankfully, the sea view doesn't supercede the curries and an extensive menu covers north and south Indian specialities. Of the starters, the crispy deep fried papad roll stuffed with potato and green peas makes the most appeal and the tandoori paneer, bursting with flavour, is a wonderful vegetarian option. Main courses, however, incite the most excitement and scurrying waiters balancing trays of glimmering copper pots create much anticipation. Butter chicken and lamb rogan josh are perennially popular in most Indian restaurants and Kashmir's versions are memorable. The lamb kadhai gosht is tasty (if not as laudable as its cousin, the rogan josh) and the dal Kashmir, a lentil and fruit curry is truly sublime. If you can bear to mess with the lingering aftertaste, a lassi is the ideal note on which to end.

Beverly Hills Centre, 11 McCausland Crescent, Umhlanga  
+27 (0) 31 561 7486/7



## Dish

Opposite the sprawling monolith of Gateway shopping centre and tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the rapidly growing area is Dish, a haven of sophistication.

Dining here is a grown-up experience as everything is well considered, from imported crockery on which to showcase beautifully presented food to a thoughtful wine list and sumptuous decor. The restaurant has succeeded in offering a fine dining experience that is blissfully free of airs and graces, and a highlight is the slick, pre-emptive service that sees one course segue seamlessly into another. As the non-prescriptive name implies, Dish provides a blank culinary canvas on which chef-patron Shaun Munro and head chef Sherradan Prinsloo can create classically inspired food with quality ingredients. It's impossible to argue with Shaun's personal endorsement of the gravalax starter – it is melt-in-the-mouth and pays homage to the subtle flavour profile of fresh Norwegian salmon. Other temptations are the intense crab soup and duck spring rolls. Duck is also worth a mention for main course and here it comes with a citrus basting and served on potato courgette rosti with gingered sherry jus. The gnocchi with gorgonzola, cream, sundried tomatoes, pesto, rocket and parmesan is outstanding; otherwise try the Durban-styled prawn curry, or opt for a good old-fashioned oxtail. Epicureans can seek refuge in any one of the fabulous desserts.

Level 1, Royal Palm Hotel, 6 Palm Boulevard, New Town Centre, Umhlanga Ridge  
+27 (0)31 581 8181



## Café 1999

Café 1999 encapsulates all that is good about the city. It's idiosyncratic; has a good dose of street cred and is inspired by a global palate.

The intimate restaurant wraps around a central bar and patrons achieve what the clean, contemporary décor cannot ... provide an animated buzz that immediately conspires to lift your mood. There can be no mistaking the Mediterranean influence and vegetarians, often a sidelined minority, are not only acknowledged but celebrated. While contemplating the menu, munch on the addictive calamata olives stuffed with ricotta, crumbed and deep-fried and served with a chilli and herb mayo. At Café 1999 you get to be master of your own destiny – not that you want to mess too much with the inspired flavours – as dishes are available in varying sizes (titbits and big bits) which encourage you to play with taste and texture. Not recommended for those who are bah humbug about ordering smaller portions and sharing food with dining companions! Don't make a decision until you've heard the specials from one of the efficient waiters but for starters try the perfectly seared calamari complimented by chourico; Turkish figs wrapped in gorgonzola and Parma ham or prawn lollipops served with a sweet chilli sauce and coriander mayo. Main courses run the gauntlet from crab with chilli, cream, lemon and parsley served on angel hair pasta to deboned loin of lamb with smashed baby potatoes, wilted greens, feta, tapenade and lamb jus. Dessert recommendations? The lavender crème brûlée and baked butterscotch cheesecake. The wine list is a great source of pride and showcases an impressive Cape line-up.

Shop 2, Silvervause Centre, Silverton Road, Berea  
+27 (0)31 202-3406