

A taste of JOBURG

The renowned Gramadoelas restaurant

Johannesburg is a city of contrast and diversity, and this diversity is reflected in its restaurants. From the township bling of Soweto's The Backroom, to the slightly dusty retro-chic of the Rand Club, who we were, are, and will become is reflected on our plates. What follows is the quick guide to understanding Johannesburg through its restaurants. **Restaurant reviews: Anna Trapido**

The Backroom

The Backroom reflects the most delicious of chic, affluent Soweto at play.

Designer gear is de rigueur for patrons, and there are Bentleys and BMWs in the parking lot. You will feel out of place if you don't dress up and put on lipstick. Along with the slick leather couches, epic whisky selection and flat screen televisions, there is live music with twinkly-star local music legends (such as Jabu Khanyile, Steve Kekana and Joe Nina) featuring regularly on the bill of fare. The edible portion of the programme is equally impressive. There is a melt-in-the-mouth oxtail topped with a tomato-redolent meaty sauce that oozes satisfyingly into huge plates of pap. The lamb chops are perfectly seared on the outside and pink in the centre with just the right amount of crisp, crunchy fat sizzling at the edges. The meal is rounded off with eye-poppingly hot chakalaka and a tart vinegary three-bean salad. The cauliflower cheese could not be more comforting or delicious.

For those with a sweet tooth there are charming, kiddies-party-style desserts. The glowing pink jelly with lashings of custard is glorious. The apple pie with ice cream is just like Mama made it.

*Shop 20, Pimville Square, Pimville Soweto
Tel: +27 (0)11 938 9388*

Gramadoelas

Eduan Naude and Brian Shalkoff have been running their Pan-African eatery since the early 1970s and they were the first South African chefs to put African cuisine into a restaurant setting.

The decor of their tiny inner city restaurant reflects the accumulation of experience and treasures that occurs over a lifetime in the food industry. There are antique copper cooking pots, dusty gourds that have seen better days, copies of the long-out-of-print Gramadoelas cookbook, and an epic collection of wicker baskets from across the continent. The menu features the best

umngqusho (Xhosa samp and beans) in town which comes to the table with a satisfying nob of melting butter seeping into this most traditional of traditional South African starches. Brave adventure tourists try the mopane worms that are deep-fried and served with a rich tomato relish. Timid souls make do with Moroccan lamb and preserved lemon tagine served with herb-infused couscous. Locals flock to the restaurant for the range of (hard to find in Johannesburg) Cape Malay classics such as tomato bredie rich with cardamom and cinnamon, bobotie with a tumeric-rich savoury custard topping. The Afrikaans classic malva pudding is moist and dense with a cream and brandy sauce.

*Market Theatre Complex, Bree Street, Newtown
Tel: +27 (0)11 838 6960*

The Rand Club

The Rand Club contains within it the oldest restaurant in Johannesburg.

Despite a recent fire, the building and the restaurant continue to stand proud after over a century of service to the city.

There are sweeping staircases, stained glass windows and slightly mangy hunting trophies on the walls. At the tables are starched napkins, crystal glasses and the kind of exquisite silver service that no longer exists anywhere else in Johannesburg. Technically, the Rand Club is a members-only venue, but a telephone call is all that is required for non-members to make a booking for the restaurant. That, and a jacket and tie – don't even think about coming without such key dress code items! Don't expect innovation from the menu. This is a restaurant to wallow in retro-chic culinary classics such as Avocado Ritz, bone marrow on toast and Sole Veronique. The contents of the very fine dessert trolley have not changed significantly since Rhodes' day. Make sure that you don't miss the silken crème caramel.

The cheese trolley contains a whole Stilton cheese which is served with a selection of preserves and crunchy ginger biscuits to die for. Finish your meal with Cognac in the library. Absolutely no children allowed. The members have only just got used to the idea of letting women into the restaurant!

*33 Loveday St, Johannesburg,
Tel: +27 (0)11 834-8311*

The Butcher Shop and Grill

This cathedral dedicated to the worship of red meat occupies a significant chunk of the Nelson Mandela Square in Sandton.

For those that have been suffering under the after-effects of Mad Cow Disease in Europe, it is a paradise of meat on the bone and steaks as big as your head. The restaurant has dark wood and brass decor that gives it a macho,

gentleman's club kind of feel. Whatever your gender, as a high-volume, steak house experience you won't do better anywhere in Gauteng. The menu features acres of rump, sirloin, T-bone, rib eye, all supported by rich, flavoursome sauces, hearty portions of crisp, salt-slaked chips, and an extremely impressive local and international wine list including Cape Wine Maker's Guild prestige items. Clearly this is not the place to take light eaters or vegetarians, but if you are longing for a meaty blow-out, there is nowhere finer. The good news for people who are sick of having their supper spoiled by the wailing of children and the roar of their parents as they finally lose their cool, the Butchers Shop and Grill has a closed kids section – like a smoking section, but the aim is to fence off the disagreeable dining youth.

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