

Tanja Kruger is new head chef of Makaron at Majeka House



Majeka House boutique hotel in Stellenbosch is home of French-themed Makaron restaurant, which has undergone a make-over, and M Bar, cocktail bar and lounge. Tanja Kruger has been appointed head chef by the property's owners Lloyd van der Merwe and Karine Dequeker-Van der Merwe. They say: "We would like Makaron to be perceived as a restaurant with rooms attached, rather than as a hotel restaurant."

Kruger was delighted the owners were keen to see sweetbreads on the menu. She says: "It's a pleasure working with owners who have a deep appreciation and respect for gourmet ingredients."

Before joining the Majeka and Makaron team, Kruger worked at Hunter's Country House, a Relais & Chateaux property on the Garden Route. She was winner of the Chaîne des Rôtisseurs Young Chef of the Year 2008 and is currently a member of the South African Culinary Olympic Team. Her career also includes stints at Lanzerac Hotel, RadissonBlu Hotel Waterfront, Five Flies Restaurant and the recent launch of deHuguenot Estate.

"I am a keen follower of the Slow Food movement, always searching for fresh, locally grown, ethically produced ingredients to inspire my menus. The winelands, with its many specialised producers and artisan suppliers, is a fantastic place to be a chef."

Grass-fed, free-range beef and organic chicken are sourced from Angus McIntosh at nearby Spier, summer berries come from Hillcrest Berry Orchards on the Helshoogte Pass, and olive oil is supplied by the Olive Shed at Tokara. Under the guidance of Kruger, Majeka's traditional French kitchen garden has just been replanted with radishes, beetroot, carrots, celery, varieties of lettuce and herbs.

Almost everything that comes out of the kitchen is made from scratch by the kitchen brigade. Preserves, jams, chutneys and cured meats are all made on site. Kruger is particularly proud of the resident baker, who produces pastries, breads, cakes, petit fours and macarons.

Makaron features contemporary furniture, reworked antiques and other design details (such as the original, handmade David Walters tableware) to set the tone for French-based classics with a modern twist. The menu evolves and the restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. A four-course tasting menu costs R325 and includes a choice of two starters, a main and a dessert from the current menu.

Summer options include starters such as fresh pea risotto, garlic froth and smoked olive tapenade or pan-fried sweetbreads with muscadel reduction and cauliflower puree; mains, include duck egg ravioli with fresh artichoke and white asparagus and truffle or beef rib-eye with foie gras butter and fine green beans. **In keeping with current trends, everything on the menu is paired to a wine and a craft beer.**

Kruger loves making soufflé, and one of her guests' favourites is a coffee soufflé with peanut butter ice cream. Other desserts include Valrhona chocolate tart with naartjie, pears and grapefruit sorbet and a cheese plate of local finds served with homemade plum paste and lavash.

Also popular is the selection of what Kruger calls "**floating food**", a lighter, leaner all day menu which is available as in-room dining and for snacking at the poolside or between spa treatments.