

# MAJEKA HOUSE APPOINTS TANJA KRUGER AS HEAD CHEF

**IT'S ALL CHANGE** at Majeka House, the exclusive boutique hotel in the Stellenbosch winelands, a region gaining global recognition for its sophisticated food and wine culture. This small luxury hotel's French-inspired restaurant, Makaron, has undergone a sophisticated makeover and M Bar, a cocktail bar and lounge oozing glamour and witty references, is a delightful new addition with an excellent list of local wines and MCC offered by the glass and an extensive line-up of local craft beers and refreshing cocktails. For Majeka House's passionate owners, Lloyd van der Merwe and Karine Dequeker-Van der Merwe, the arrival of talented chef Tanja Kruger marks the beginning of a new chapter. 'We would like Makaron to be perceived as a restaurant with rooms attached, rather than as a hotel restaurant', comments Karine. With good food as a focal point, the exquisitely appointed rooms and two new suites that are at the heart of Majeka House are excellent reasons to check in for a stolen night or a proper holiday.

When Tanja Kruger was interviewed for the position of head chef, she could hardly believe her luck when Karine mentioned that she would like to see sweetbreads on the menu – always. 'It's a pleasure working with owners who have a deep appreciation and respect for gourmet ingredients,' says Tanja.

Tanja previously enjoyed a successful career at Hunter's Country House, a Relais & Chateaux property on the Garden Route. Winner of the Chaine de Rotisseurs Young Chef of the Year 2008 and a current member of the South African Culinary Olympic team, Tanja is no stranger to cooking in the Cape. Her CV 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!'

Tuned in to the provenance and quality of every ingredient in her kitchen, Tanja is committed to farm-to-fork eating. Grass-fed, free-range beef and organic chicken is 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 Tanja, Majeka's traditional French kitchen garden has just been replanted with radishes, beetroot, carrots, celery, varieties of lettuce and plenty of herbs commonly used in her cooking.

The kitchen is an industrious hub, with almost everything that can be homemade produced by the talented staff. Preserves, jams, chutneys and cured meats are all made on site. Tanja is particularly proud of the resident baker, who produces pastries, breads, cakes and petit fours – including the prettiest, daintiest macarons – throughout the day.

Makaron, like its namesake, is visually stimulating and beautiful – the ideal space in which to savour food made with great care and respect. Contemporary furniture, reworked antiques, playful elements and exquisite design details, such as the original, handmade David Walters tableware, sets the tone for French-based classics with a thoroughly modern twist. The constantly evolving menu is served at both lunch and dinner, and in the evenings guests may also indulge in a reasonably priced, four-course tasting menu (R325 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 muscadell reduction and cauliflower puree; mains, such as duck egg ravioli with fresh artichoke and white asparagus and truffle or beef rib-eye with foie gras butter and fine green beans. In tune with current trends, everything on the menu is paired to a wine and a craft beer making for lively conversation and comparisons around the table.

Tanja loves making soufflé, which is why a coffee soufflé with peanut butter ice cream currently headlines a list of irresistible desserts that also includes Valrhona chocolate tart with naartjie, pears and grapefruit sorbet and a cheese plate of local finds served with homemade plum paste and lavash.

In addition to the sumptuous breakfast on offer in Makaron, there is also a lighter, leaner all-day menu of what Tanja likes to call 'floating food', which is available as in-room dining and for snacking on poolside or in between spa treatments.

