



# A STANDING OVATION - AUBERGINE

## DINING NEWS

Jun 30th 2011, 00:00 Winnie Bowman

Chef Harald Bresselschmidt is like a fine, carefully matured wine: precious, precise, unpredictable, exciting and most often close to perfection. And so is his food. Aubergine is in the heart of Cape Town's historic Gardens area in the former home of the first chief justice of the Cape, Sir John Wylde. Refurbishment has artfully melded old and new, turning the original 1830 home into an elegant contemporary venue, inviting guests to enjoy a special meal at every visit.

The menu features innovative, balanced à la carte dishes as well as a five-course degustation menu, which includes an amuse-bouche, sorbet between courses, as well as coffee or tea and friandises. Deciding on what to eat is a real dilemma, because every dish sounds as tempting as the next, with variety to suit every palate.

What to choose? Both menus are prepared under Harald's commitment to local, seasonal produce and seafood from sustainable practices. Organic vegetables have long been a feature on the Aubergine tables and vegetarians are catered for very well. Sommeliers are on hand to recommend from the extensive local and international wine list, mindfully selected and carefully stored in temperature-controlled cellars from the very inception of Aubergine in 1996. My partner started with the freshest, melt-in-the-mouth hand-cut yellowtail carpaccio, served with an oriental dressing on an asparagus and chicory salad, while I was delighted by the free-range duck breast and truffle-scented scrambled duck egg. Both dishes were complemented by the 2009 Neil Ellis Groenekloof Sauvignon Blanc with its zesty tropical fruit flavours and melting, smooth acidity. The portions were perfectly sized, allowing us to enjoy our much-anticipated main courses.

The regal Vergenoegd Bordeaux-style blend 2000 set the tone for the main courses to follow: free-range duck served two ways, confit and spring rolls, paired with teriyaki-glazed pod vegetables, and the special of the day, veal piccata served with wild mushroom risotto. Both courses were flavourful, highlighting the best in the individual ingredients, but making the combination a symphony in the mouth and leaving one wanting more! Harald's use of sauces needs a special mention: it never overpowers the individual dishes in either flavour or quantity, but completes and elevates dishes to excite all the senses. Dessert rounded off a perfect evening. My partner opted for the savoury, truffle-scented Cape Maconnais soufflé with fresh figs, accented by a glass of Hildebrandt Noble Late Harvest, while I sampled the fondant of Valrhona chocolate, peach vacherin and a lavender sabayon. It was pure wizardry in presentation, texture and taste! Light as a feather, richly flavoured but not overpowering, always paired with seasonal fruit to balance. A lighter lunch menu is available from Wednesday to Saturday and dinner from Monday to Saturday.

In addition, a "Cinq a Sept" menu (literally meaning from 5–7) is offered for meeting friends after work or for pre-theatre enjoyment. Aubergine restaurant is the choice to celebrate life with exceptional gastronomic creations and perfectly paired wines in an ambience where time flies. Harald's culinary genius and passion can be experienced in each mouthful. The service is slick and professional, making every diner feel like a celebrity on every occasion. Please pass me the menu and the wine list! 39 Barnet Street, Gardens. Phone 021 465 4909 or visit [www.aubergine.co.za](http://www.aubergine.co.za)