

## **WINE-PAGES**

**Tom Cannavan**

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### **Aubergine, 39 Barnet St.**

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German-born chef proprietor Harald Bresselschmidt has been behind the stoves here since 1996, and this was the fourth time I'd dined in Aubergine since 2002, finding the quality of the food to be matched by its utter consistency. The original interior had church-style pews and bare wooden tables, but it has had a much more glamorous makeover to suit its top-end cuisine and wine offering. We started with a beautifully tangy gazpacho amuse bouche, served with a quenelle of goat's cheese to add a cooling creaminess, then a little chunk of confit smoked salmon appeared, with a lemon and herb mayo to sharpen things up. For my first course proper, I chose a classic of the menu: aubergine soufflé filled with marinated goat's cheese ricotta and served with oven braised tomatoes, a vivid mizuna coulis and given extra nutty richness with a Grana Padana tuille. It was warming and delicious, the flavours creamily soft but not bland. For my main I hummed and hawed, but eventually settled on loin of blesbok medallions, a game meat of the region, which was served with truffled potato, cauliflower puree and a deeply coloured and flavoured sauce of sautéed prunes. This really was outstanding, the meat as soft as butter to cut, but with a juicy texture and lightly gamy flavour, it was sensationally good. To finish, a return to soufflé, but this time a double chocolate version that was melting in the middle but just crisply textured at the edges, served with a compote of marinated cherries. With coffee and petit fours and wines expertly matched by the glass - a Cap Classique rosé from Ambeloui in Hout Bay, Aubergine's house Riesling made by Bruwer Raats, Eagle's Nest Shiraz, and a Late harvest Mourvèdre, the total bill of 1600 Rand (£110) for two including service was one of the restaurant world's great bargains. (2013)

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