



PREVIOUS SPREAD

Dog bowls outside Lulu;
a table card at Sugo

THIS PAGE (clockwise from left) asparagus, strawberry, peppered cream cheese and artichoke salad at Kitch; fish puffs with paprika tartar salsa at Fino; children love the chocolate ice cream at Sugo; lunchtime buffet at Moemas

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A few years ago, finding a good pizza delivery shop in Johannesburg was a challenge – now culinary enclaves are springing up all over and the variety of restaurant choices is overwhelming.

In Parktown North, for instance, deciding where to eat is as difficult as deciding what to eat. Tantalising menus feature just-out-the-oven croissants, homemade pasta, Gorgonzola pizza, mouth-watering cakes and the more virtuous option of fresh salads. And that's not even taking into account the exotic cocktails...

Last year, the Northpark shopping centre was revamped and renamed the Parktown Quarter, with many of the old neighbourhood stores being converted into eateries (locals have dubbed it 'Restaurant Row'). Nearby 4th Avenue is another gastronomic strip worth exploring.

One way of getting around having to choose only one restaurant is to sample all the options – which is exactly what we did...

MOEMAS

Parktown Quarter, 7th & 3rd Avenues, Parktown North. 011-788-7725

Open daily

Started eight months ago by chef Danielle Postma and her partner Mike Caudle, a care worker turned pastry chef, this simple and stylish café/deli in the back corner of Parktown Quarter already has a loyal following.

It's easy to see why. The decor is understated, simple and clean, with high ceilings and large windows. On the terrace, white umbrellas hover over snowy linen tablecloths offset by bright fuchsia napkins. The eatery has an elegant feel, but the real focus at Moemas is just where it should be – on the food.

My mouth waters as I stand before the window display, reading cake names handwritten on little white display cards: caramel, coconut, cranberry, chocolate chip, pecan bar, white-chocolate tart with raspberry and pistachio, white-chocolate cheesecake with macadamia-nut brittle, and fruit galette with mascarpone cheese, served warm. I settle on a portion of Belgian-chocolate fudge cake.

Extending my fork, I slice through a thin layer of bitter cocoa dusting and a small piece of the cake crashes to the plate like a glacial cliff breaking off and sliding into the sea. I am rarely at a loss for words, but this cake exhausts my list of superlatives. It's creamy, satisfying, challenging, creative, subtle and interesting – just for starters.

Every inch of the Moemas menu shows the kind of devotion and attention to detail that typifies a great deli/café.

For breakfast, there are sweet-potato rösti with sautéed mushrooms, chunky tomato and red pepper sauce, and poached eggs with bacon; French toast with apricot and plum compote and crème fraîche;

cranberry and almond brioche; and pear and raspberry muffins.

At lunch, Danielle prepares an exquisite buffet of salads that include roast aubergine with saffron yoghurt, basil, parsley and pomegranate seeds; baby beetroot with diced red onion and a balsamic and Dijon mustard vinaigrette; and butternut roasted in rosemary and olive oil, mixed with a roasted macadamia and pumpkin-seed dressing.

I believe truly great food comes from love – a love of food, ingredients, cooking and, most importantly, a love of life. Danielle and Mike hold hands and laugh easily as they tell me about Moemas (Danielle's pet name for her grandmother). Unlike most fledgling restaurateurs, they look relaxed and happy.

I ask about the ingredients, as meals this good must come from top-notch produce. 'The eggs come from a farm near the Cradle of Humankind,' Danielle says, 'where the chickens listen to classical music.' That explains a lot.

LULU

Parktown Quarter, 7th & 3rd Avenues, Parktown North. 082-584-9075

Open daily

Lulu is the kind of place people take the dog to on Sunday mornings when they want to read the paper in the sun. It's open and airy, with a comfortable couch, bright red and orange plastic chairs, and water bowls thoughtfully provided for canine companions. ▶