

AMAZING GRAZE

Limpopo's subtropical farming town of Tzaneen is fast becoming one of the finest culinary hotspots of the north, says LISA MARTUS

KINGS WALDEN GARDEN MANOR TZANEEN



MAGIC AND MYSTERY WEAVE THROUGH the arches and past the stone lions that flank the burbling fountains at Kings Walden Garden Manor. The garden has you following moss-covered pathways through a sea of purple agapanthus to the edge of the world where a single giant eucalyptus stands sentinel against purple mountains.

But it's not only the garden which draws you in, because Kings Walden's new chef, Steven Jacobs, is creating soul-food in this magical place. Having lived and worked in Europe all his life, Steven says he 'didn't want to reach the age of 70 and regret not having done something different'. Sourcing produce from local suppliers has meant that he is much more creative in his menus. Whatever is available that day directs the meal Steven will prepare that evening – a liberating concept for someone who in the past would set a menu three months in advance.

As the newly-refurbished Kings Walden gets lit up by dozens of candles for the evening meal, Steven picks coriander from the lush herb garden and creates

the first of four courses. We are treated to a richly flavoured onion tartlet with baked camembert and tomato confit, followed by a fresh and fragrant Thai soup. Steven describes his style as 'Mediterranean with Asian influences,' bringing out the fresh flavours of each dish without overwhelming it.

Already in a state of culinary ecstasy, we wait with anticipation for the Scottish salmon with wasabi cream, which does not disappoint in terms of taste or presentation. Steven only cooks food that he enjoys himself and this is evident in the desserts he offers us. The chocolate tart and cr me br l e are melt-in-the-mouth delicious, while the frozen macadamia nougat with mango sauce offers the most unusual taste sensation and is the perfect finale to a delightful meal. The four-course meal costs R225 per person.

Kings Walden 015 307 3262

YUM YUM BISTRO TZANEEN



YUM YUM IS INDISPUTABLY AS GOOD AS ITS name promises. This small restaurant on the outskirts of Tzaneen has a quiet patio with potted herbs, burbling water and classy d cor with bright flashes of colour. A funky indoor alternative for the rare bad-weather day is decorated with striking art-work and dramatic chandeliers. Yum Yum has that mellow outdoor ambience that makes you feel like you're on holiday on an ordinary day, and is a calm haven from the outside world.

Chef Jonathan Taylor has been 'stirring the pot' around far-flung kitchens from Elandsfontein to Rosmead, Hoedspruit to Helshoogte, culminating in a sub-Saharan restaurant close to London's Hyde Park. Jonathan whipped around the world gathering taste experiences and couldn't wait to bring them home to South Africa, opening Ruby in the Dust in Cape Town and then Mosaic Restaurant in the mountains of Modjadjikloof before bringing gourmet grub to the tropical town of Tzaneen.

The menu at Yum Yum has something for every palate and pocket, from their famous lamb shank (R95) to a host of yummy salad options like beetroot

with goat's cheese smothered in Dukkah (R38). My all-time favourite is the Cajun calamari with risotto balls (R68), or perhaps the gourmet burger with red onion marmalade and mozzarella cheese (R62). Everything is prepared with fresh organic produce, including fragrant herbs from the farm, and is presented with pizzazz, while the mint lemonade is so very more-ish. As for desserts, the cr me br l e is a work of art with chocolate latticework and gooseberries, but the smashed meringue and berry coulis (R35) is still top of my list for a hot summer's evening.

Yum Yum's small selection of treats-to-take-home includes the creamiest home-made macadamia nut butter; funky tins of herbal teas and almond biscotti. Springing from the incredible success of the seasonal Mosaic Restaurant, Yum Yum Bistro is a fantastic alternative to Tzaneen's mostly fast-food fare.

Yum Yum Bistro 015 307 3984