

# A FEAST FOR THE SENSES

A weekend on a wine farm in Hemel-en-Aarde delivers many sensory surprises, writes **Hilary Biller**

The Voormanshuis cottage sits at the foot of the Babylonstoren mountains on Creation Wine Estate. PICTURE: CREATION

## THE RESTAURANT

**Creation**  
Hemel-en-Aarde  
Open Monday to Sunday  
Tel: (028) 212 1107  
Creationwines.com

I'd never fully experienced the might of a Cape winter storm and there was no better place to watch the driving rain and howling wind than from the heat of a roaring wood-burning fire, glass of Creation Elation bubbly in hand, in a cottage, the Voormanshuis, at the foot of the Babylonstoren mountains on Creation Wine Estate.

Established by Jean-Claude (JC) and Carolyn Martin in 2002 in Hemel-en-Aarde in the Western Cape, the area is famed for the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines it produces. The area is a short drive outside the seaside town of Hermanus, where my husband and I were staying for the weekend. The floor to ceiling glass windows to one side of the cottage made us feel we were right in the centre of the storm, looking back into the mountains, the vineyards, trees and fynbos awash with the earthy hues of Autumn.

During the storm I kept nipping out onto the covered veranda to soak up the atmosphere and a heady mix of aromas: the smell of rain soaking dry vegetation; the herbaceous fragrance of damp fynbos; the musty smell of piles of fallen leaves and the perfect antidote for a cold evening, the fragrance of a cream of cauliflower soup with a hint of nutmeg warming on the stove in the



Top, hake served on a beautiful ceramic plate, below dessert stack of crêpes with orange. PICTURES: CREATION

cottage, marking the start of what was to be a gourmet weekend.

I speak of a heightening of the senses as this is what Carolyn, never short of creative ideas, and her kitchen brigade – led by the unflappable and talented exec chef Eleanor Niehaus, have cleverly used in creating an Aromatic Winter Experience in the Tasting Room restaurant, the hub of the wine estate.

Perched on a hillside, the venue offers the best vistas of the farm, to one side the dam

## A toast to Father's Day

There's wine in their genes. Both JC and Carolyn Martin come from pioneering wine stock. JC was 14 years old when he decided to become a winemaker. His inspiration came from his grandfather, Jules Martin, who established the family winery on the banks of Lake Bielle in Switzerland in 1935.

Carolyn is the daughter of South African wine pioneer Walter Finlayson, whose father, Maurice, bought the farm Hartenberg in the Stellenbosch region in 1947. It is here Walter learnt the art of winemaking and where Carolyn was born. JC and Carolyn's children, Glenn and Emma Martin, are deemed to follow in their parents' path. Glenn is studying viticulture and oenology at Stellenbosch University, while Emma at the tender age of 11 was making a single barrel Pinot Noir under the watchful eye of her wine-making father.

filled to the brim after the rains. The real beauty of the place lies in its versatility and how you want to enjoy the Creation offering – a casual wine tasting in the cellar, a brunch pairing enjoyed al fresco on the lawn or a sit-down occasion in the restaurant, toasty warm around the central fire.

There's something for everyone, including vegetarian, vegan and pescatarians and even those who are gluten intolerant – their brunch pairing is gluten free – and for those

who aren't you won't feel short changed as each course packs a flavour punch and you won't feel you are missing out.

The Aromatic Winter Experience, a culinary highlight of the weekend, is a sensory journey explored through six courses; all small portions, tapas-style, yet each big on flavour served to highlight the versatile nature of a specific cultivar or blend of Creation wines. And through the evocative descriptions on the menu come many references to JC's Swiss heritage, like the starter, a potato and celery rosti with cream cheese and a shot of spicy dhal soup served with Creation's Sauvignon Blanc 2020 which awakens the senses.

I loved the Resonance course, a fillet of perfectly steamed line-caught fish, hake at its best (Creation use the Abalobi fishers who supply sustainably sourced seafood to the restaurant) enlivened with a dab of gochujang, a Korean chilli sauce tamed with fresh lime and dashi, a Japanese-style broth.

It was delicious and served in a custom-made ceramic bowl with their Chardonnay, a visual treat. The dark almost purple coloured Creation Syrah, Grenache 2019 was the perfect foil to the rich, hearty three bean duck cassoulet with handmade chipolata.

For dessert, a visual feast of seasonal citrus in a nutty stack of crêpes suzette, thin layers sandwiched with a delicate orange coconut cream accompanied by straw coloured fruity Creation Viognier. A fitting feast to end a wonderful weekend.

The Aromatic Winter Experience costs R495, including the wine tasting with each course. Biller was a guest of Creation.

## Wine

Jean Claude Martin, winemaker and Creation co-owner, chooses his three wine picks



### Vivaldi in a glass Creation Viognier

Creation's viognier is planted on the cooler south-facing slopes where the vines yield evenly ripened, firm-skinned grapes with good acidity. The longer hang-time is beneficial as the build-up of the aromatics and full flavour profile come right at the end. The wine is not fermented in oak barrels but in stainless steel to preserve the racy freshness and minerality. The purity of fruit makes this wine enticing and versatile. **R140**



### Forever romantic Creation Pinot Noir

A bevy of seductive red berries, the earthiness of shitake mushroom. Sheer romance in a glass. My favourite cultivar – I love drinking it, love growing it and love making it. The Hemel-en-Aarde, close to Hermanus with its cool climate and clay-rich soils is eminently suited to the cultivation of top quality pinot noir. **R230**



### Oh so umami ... Creation Syrah, Grenache

This well-endowed Rhône-style blend rewards with intense flavours of ripe plum, black pepper, tapenade and umami. The cool climatic conditions at Creation are well suited to the cultivation of Rhône cultivars as we have an extended ripening period. The syrah and grenache grapes are picked some three to four weeks later than the pinot noir and we follow a similar wine-making approach, with minimal intervention. **R215**