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## Restaurant guide for Simon's Town and around

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## Restaurant Guide for Simon's Town and around

Ton Dietz and Annemieke van Haastrecht, based on 'eating out' during their sabbatical leave period in Simon's Town, South Africa (Western Cape), March-May 2008. It was made as a gift to our wonderful hosts Diane and Peter, but now shared with the world...

Legend:

Food Quality	View	Interior design	Price
***** superb	⊖⊖⊖ Very good	∧∧∧ Beautiful	RRR Expensive
**** very good	⊖⊖ OK	∧∧ OK	RR Standard
*** good	⊖ Not so good	∧ Nothing special	R Cheap
** not so good			
* rather terrible			

We do not accept any liability for this list and what it does to your stomach and to the economic well being of the Restaurant's owners and staff.

Note: These reviews are written by Dutch people, generally known to enjoy making fun of everything they encounter including themselves. Probably their best virtue is writing down exactly what they think; it is also their worst characteristic. And their English might be Denglish, sometimes.

The list of restaurants is presented in order of our judgement of food quality:

*Category: Beyond concourse*

### Disa 15

*Beyond concourse/⊖⊖⊖/∧∧∧/ R*

Secret telephone number

This is a home-based restaurant with a small braai in the garden, and a round dinner table in the beautiful dining room, hanging over the ocean. The hosts are the best you can imagine and host Peter manages the braai as if he was born to do that. Diane complements the meal with various delicious salads and homemade breads. Peter also dresses up to match the nationality of the guests (in our case he surprised us with clogs, although not the original ones). At one occasion we first visited the Fish market of Kalk Bay to buy a delicious silverfish that was roasted to perfection on the braai, together with Spar-corns and vegetable pens. The host used dried wood from his garden for the fire and if guests are panicking about the CO<sub>2</sub> sent to the atmosphere they can walk with the house dog Mr d'Arcy, who, by scratching the soil, sequestrates carbon as compensation for his boss's folly. The host serves most delicious wines and some guests bring their own wines (in one case a Gouverneurs sauvignon blanc from Groot Constantia, which had also been bought right where it had been produced). To create heaven on earth Peter had once created a chocolate mousse as desert, using a recipe that had been passed on to him by his mother, who had it from her mother, and so backwards till the times chocolate entered the English upper class tables. On other occasions we had a very nice Karoo lamb from the oven, and of course also a braai with boerewors and other Pick and Pay meat and also those had been roasted to perfection. This is clearly the place to be if you happen to spend a sabbatical leave somewhere on Planet Earth.

*Category: \*\*\*\*\**

### **Bon Appetit**

\*\*\*\*\*/Θ/ΛΛ/ RRR

021 7862412

This is clearly the best restaurant in Simon's Town. For the view, it is on the 'wrong' side of the road, and the windows are covered by a multitude of Christmas lights to avoid jealous views from the outside and to give you a special feeling inside. But this restaurant does not need a view. Also one forgets the black and white pictures on the wall, which look a bit cheap. The cook is superb, and the waitresses give you a feeling of being treated as very special guests. Even if the prices are a bit on the high side (and off-season that probably results in many empty tables) the price-quality relationship is very good, and in Europe you would probably have this quality of a meal for at least four times the price. Everything we have eaten here is delicate and presented with style. It starts with a small appetiser as a compliment of the cook, and after that you can have delicious starters, heavenly main courses, and divine desserts. People who come to this restaurant seem to realise how special it is, because either it only attracts the upper ten of Simon's Town, who generally hide themselves from the common man, or visitors try to look a bit more sophisticated whenever they go to Bon Appetit, and leave their sandals or clogs, short trousers, and faded-colour t-shirts at home. Also, we haven't seen any youngsters with bare feet here. Unfortunately we haven't seen any non-White customers either. They should change their minds. This restaurant indeed deserves to be known as 'bon appetit'.

### **The Captain's Table**

\*\*\*\*\*/Θ/ΛΛ/ RRR

This restaurant is the best-kept secret of Simon's Town. It exists since November 2006 and there are plans to extend it, even with a high panorama terrace looking out over Simon's Town. The restaurant is on the first floor above the rowdy bar of The British Hotel, where many sailors and navy people meet, drink, play snooker, and have lots of fun and an occasional fight. The barman leads you behind the bar and up a flight of back-stairs to the small dining room. It's equipped with nicely positioned tables and some of the interior design elements show a fine taste, particularly the textiles. The view is (still) rather absent, with two small high windows looking towards the main street and the navy buildings (not worth looking at). You might have a glance at Zuma's Pride, the navy ships that South Africa bought in 1996 to defend itself against nobody knows. The food is nice, and some of it excellent (we had a very delicious sorbet for instance as a compliment of the chef; but also the fresh oysters, the gnocchi (best ever!), the venison, the lamb and some of the desserts were really good. Not as stylish as Bon Appetit, but good. The waitress who served us was a bit clumsy, but did her best to make us feel at home, and so it felt. It is a strange experience to leave the place through the crowded bar area where it is suddenly very noisy. Strange, because upstairs you feel you are in a completely different world, although occasional cries travel up to reach you there. This place is certainly worth a visit. But bring some money with you because it is not cheap.

*Category: \*\*\*\*\**

### **Harbour House - Live Bait (Kalk Bay)**

\*\*\*\*\*/ΘΘΘ/ΛΛΛ-ΛΛ/ RRR-RR

021 7884133

Although not in Simon's Town, these should be included in your 'must-go's' if you happen to look for a restaurant in the environs of the town. In fact, for breakfasts and lunches it should be the first thing to do: go to 'Live Bait' and be caught, and for a beautiful and delicious evening experience, you should go to the Harbour House on the first floor. Diane's statement "the better the view, the poorer the food" might be true for quite some places in Simon's Town, it is absolutely wrong for these twin restaurants. During the day a lot of activity takes place in Kalk Bay's little fishing harbour, including seals – and also a giant one among them – who are treated to the leftovers after fish-sale women's assistants have cleaned the fish that you bought for an evening braai. Many people on the huge pier try to catch their own fish, and you see old hands teaching their grandchildren how to do that. When the winds are fierce the views are spectacular, and the sound is ear deafening, as the breakers crash on the boulders, and foam can reach as high as the top of the first floor of the restaurant. If you dare you can sit outside towards the sea, but also inside people are sometimes getting their extra helping of a bit of sea water. Both restaurants serve a lot of different types of food, but fish and seafood is what you should have. An occasional bad (or at least bad-looking) mussel is part of the deal, though, and downstairs the very busy waiters do sometimes give you the impression that the quicker you are gone the more customers they will have.

*Category: \*\*\**

### **Salty Sea Dog**

\*\*\*/ΘΘ/Λ/ R

021 7861918

This Fish and Chips restaurant located on Wharf Street next to the harbour of Simon's Town has quite a nice view of the harbour. The place looks like any other fish and chips place. One can either sit inside or outside. Plastic sheets protect the outside when it is very windy. The menu is very simple: fish and chips, and salads. All fish however, is of very good quality and brought in fresh from the sea every day. The snoek is delicious and also the salads are excellent. It is almost always fully booked and very popular among the locals. Apart from good the food is also very cheap.

The service is very friendly. We were explained in detail how to eat snoek, which needs some practice because of the long bones inside.

They also do take-a-ways.

### **Just Sushi**

\*\*\*/Θ/ΛΛ/ RR (ΘΘΘ if you are British because of the Dog View)

021 7864340

Just Sushi is in Waterfront Centre at the side of the harbour and looks out on Jubilee Square with the statue of the local hero dog 'Just Nuisance'.

One can both sit inside and outside. When you are outside you have a view of the ocean and harbour. The place looks simple but friendly. It is not very large and often fully booked. Two Chinese cooks make the food with care. You can see them prepare the food.

Also this restaurant has a very simple menu: just sushi. The different combinations of sushi are of excellent quality. All fish is very fresh. We have eaten there very regularly and the food was always of the same high quality. They serve organic wines. Everyday they serve a few deserts.

The service is friendly and quite fast, but sometimes we were a bit surprised about the outfit of some young waitresses (code word: hippie; bare feet, very scarce tops on ample breasts,

views mostly of ample legs as well, but as Europeans we were probably not yet adjusted to South-Africa's dress code).

### **Café Pescado/the Criterion**

\*\*\*/Θ/Λ/ R

021 7862272

Café Pescado is housed in the building of the former cinema that used to be a popular hangout for navy folk. The place is located opposite Jubilee Square on Queens Road. No view to speak of. Apart from a restaurant this is also an Internet café. The place is quite large and has separate smoking and non-smoking areas. Compared to most other places the public is very diverse and the atmosphere very friendly. The interior is not remarkable.

It has rather a medium sized menu, but it boasts to have the best pizzas in town. These are indeed very good and you can see the cook preparing the dough. Service could take a bit longer than usual but the pizzas are always made while you are looking. We tried a few other dishes, which were also of good quality.

On Tuesday's and Sunday's there is life music of the 60<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> by Dave (a pensioner who sings and plays guitar) and Roger. The pensioners from the area enjoy that very much. We did so as well.

They also do take-a-ways.

### **Bertha's Restaurant**

\*\*\*/ΘΘΘ/ΛΛ/ RR

021 7862138

This huge restaurant (at least huge for a small place like Simon's Town) occupies the ground floor of a building in which also the Harbour Restaurant and Just Sushi are housed. You have to pass a kind of counter, where waiters wait (and make fun among themselves) to bring you to your table. You can choose an inside and an outside place, and both have a magnificent view over the harbour. It can be windy, though, and on one occasion a large segment of the outside was occupied by Hells Angels, and apparently nobody wanted to sit next to them. Probably because of the success of Just Sushi with its sushi Bertha also decided to include sushi and sashimi on its menu, and when we were there, at half the price. That was not bad, but not half as good as Just Sushi. Bertha's also serves meat and fish dishes that are all a bit bland and the moment you have finished eating the last bit, the waiters come with a speedy action to snatch your plate from under your nose. We also noticed a peculiar action by a waiter, who – after seeing us in our maybe a bit overdressed outfit – decided that only the best (and clearly most expensive) wine was good enough for us. Our (local) company was fast enough to avoid that financial disaster. And when we once had lunch there, the waiter dropped the credit card of another guest and it fell in between the wooden panes, where it disappeared. At least, that was the opinion of the headwaiter. He had a superficial glance between the cracks, and decided that it could not have fallen. Fortunately seven guests had seen it drop, so he had to back off, and after the wooden pane was removed (lot of fun) it was indeed recovered. So for its food it is mostly a two star experience, but the fun you get in addition, makes it a three star restaurant. Not all your guests might like the rather dull and overcooked way they prepare the 'catch of the day'.

### **Black Marlin**

\*\*\*/ΘΘΘ/ΛΛΛ/RR(R)

021 7861621

The Black Marlin is a restaurant along the shore of the ocean about 5 km south of Simon's Town. The view from the terrace and from the restaurant is beautiful. Both the terrace and the restaurant look very nice. The restaurant has an old-times atmosphere and an open burning fireplace when the weather is a bit cold.

The service is friendly, but not always adequate. Sometimes orders are forgotten to pass through to the kitchen, important information is not always mentioned.

The food is not very special. Several dishes are served on a skewer, but when put on your table the food regularly falls from the high-placed skewer on your plate, hopefully not splattering your clothes. Luckily, you are warned about this in advance. The 'grilled' kingklip funnily enough had a bread crust around it. The dessert of chocolate with orange when served proved not to have the orange sauce, this because orange was not available (rather remarkable in an orange producing country like South-Africa). In 'winter' (even if the weather is very fine) the place looks deserted in the evenings, but they say it is often full during lunchtime. We hope that is true, also for the waiters, because in the evenings they often looked obviously bored, even when we were around.

*Category: \*\**

### **Seaforth Restaurant**

\*\*/ΘΘΘ/Λ/ R(R)

This is the bulk restaurant of Simon's Town, catering for busloads of tourists who see their penguins (many Japanese and Chinese; "How was your holiday? I don't know yet, I haven't seen my pictures"; many Germans as well; "aber, es gibt Schwarze hier!") and buy their curio (thirteen in a dozen, freshly made "art and antiques from all over Africa"). After putting another have-done sign before "penguins", they are hungry and they need a bite. But the bus is waiting! The view is wonderful (but please hurry up, we don't have time for the view), and the restaurant is huge and enables you to admire many over-fed and under-dressed tourists. To avoid spending too much time looking and gossiping, waiters are extremely fast in making sure your plate is gone when you have just had your last bite. And the food? The cook has to please everyone so he/she makes it just acceptable. Nothing special. Nothing original. Of course it is too sweet. A bit too much fat as well. It gives you a solid basis for the next bus ride, probably to Cape Point. "Guys, we have half an hour here. Folks, we expect you back at four in the restaurant!" And why is fish curry not at all fish curry? Why is a special game meal in a pot not at all special?

### **Boulder's Beach Restaurant**

\*\*/ΘΘΘ/ΛΛΛ/RR

021 7861758

This restaurant is a disappointment when you start your main course. Its views are very nice (near the penguins) and the restaurant's interior design is quite beautiful and even stylish. Waiters are also trying their level best. And the menu lists mouth-watering meals. The oysters we had for a starter were the best we had in South Africa. But what a shame was the main course we had. It was as if the cook tried to make a splendid meal and then decided to add half a kilo of sugar, spoiling everything that makes this restaurant worth visiting. Later, people tried to explain to us that the over-sweet taste of many South African meals is a result of the sun's strong shining, which adds lots of sugars to every piece of vegetable and fruit, so it is not the cook's but the sun's fault. Decide for your self what version to choose. Either

way, this restaurant was by far the sweetest thing on earth. Not to our liking, as sour Dutchmen. Another person tried to defend the cook by saying that he came from abroad and tried to experiment with fusion cooking. We don't think adding half a kilo of sugar per meal is a good idea, not even if you call it 'fusion'.

### **The Meeting Place**

\*\*/ΘΘ/ΛΛΛ/ RR

This restaurant is located on the first floor of Simon's Town main street, on the Western side. Because it is on an upper floor, you can still have a nice view to the harbour, and it is protected from winds that can often be fierce ("Simon's Town has gales 100 days a year") by long plastic curtains, although these tend to make quite some noise. The place tries to look like a beach and fun place, with easy chairs and sofas (also for lovers), and wooden tables, with a huge bar, and with waiters and waitresses who casually address everyone with 'hi guys' or 'hi folks'. The food is not too good, though, and one of us became sick for two days after eating the seafood, and probably meeting a bad mussel. It was also quite remarkable that the so-called line-fish ('catch of the day') appeared to be Norwegian salmon, all the way from Tromsø. The menu tries to be funky, with lots of hybrids, and good South-African overdoses of sugar. But maybe we should try again...

### **Roaring Forties Restaurant**

\*\*/ΘΘΘ/Λ/ R

021 7864808

To be honest: we only had a quick bite there, with a beer, and for that it was just good enough. If the sun shines it is a lovely place, but rather worn down (needs some upgrading since the forties) and not so roaring, or it must be the sailors. They seem to like to visit this place and forget about protocol.

*Category: \**

### **Sushi Yama, but better called Asian drama**

\*/Θ/Λ/ R

This is a must-go to if you want to share our horror. Asian food can be delicious and delicate, even if the place itself looks casual (as this restaurant certainly does), and the environment is ugly (as is certainly the case here, with the Spar, a bottle store = all varieties of alcohol you can think of, and a parking place the most exciting things in the nearby area). The restaurant advertises with Chinese, Thai and Japanese food and it has a really huge menu, with umpty different combinations of very many different meals. We asked where the cooks came from, and they happened to be Chinese and Thai. So: Chinese and Thai it would be for our main meal. But we decided we would try Japanese Tempura to make it multi culti Asian style. We should not have done that because the vegetable Tempura we took was made so greasy (if not gruesome) that it spoiled our appetite for the rest of the meal. But for that rest of the meal there would only be one way to express our appreciation: Yahgg. We heard the Chinese takeaways are fine.

### **The Harbour Restaurant**

\*/ΘΘΘ/ΛΛ/ RR

This was the first and the worst restaurant we went to as far as the taste of the food was concerned. The view is magnificent, indeed looking over the harbour from above, and the entry is promising, with homemade jams and other delicacies for sale. It takes a while before the owner notices that he has guests. But what a disastrous cook must be stumbling around. The seafood spaghetti was covered with a fat and half-cold butter and milk sauce, and a sweetish taste that was not Italian at all and where all the seafood delicacies had been drowned in bad taste. The Malay curry Cape Style must have been made from recipe books, which missed the point completely and, again, had this sugary taste that can only cause diabetes at later age. We never went back.