

WINE  
TALK

## In Search of Soul Food

*Enjoy delis and markets for their homemade inspiration or simply for stocking up on specialist goodies? Jacqui Latimer presents a Cape selection*

I come from a line of salt-of-the-earth domestic goddesses. Not for them Nigella's coquettish glances and figure-hugging twin sets. Their farmhouse fare was conjured in floured aprons and sensible shoes and the memory of their strawberry flans, stewed quinces and ginger preserves still makes my mouth water.

I've never been much of a flan maker myself and bottling preserves is not my forte, but my love for soulful food draws me to farmers' markets and delis like a bee to a honey pot. Fortunately for me, produce markets and delis seem to be springing up all over the country.

In the Cape I find I'm spoilt for choice. Should I head to the Porters Estate Produce Market in Tokai or take a coastal drive to Hermanus to the Hermanuspietersfontein Farmers' Market? I could also cruise over the Helshoogte pass to Franschhoek and browse for goodies at the local farmers' market held under the trees at the Dutch Reformed Church. Then there's the Robertson Farmers' Market held once a month at the town's Wine Tourism grounds. And then all the wineland delis. Life is good.

In Hermanus, the **HERMANUSPIETERSFONTEIN** winery's production area is lined with undercover stalls of fresh fruit and vegetables, HPF wine and locally made

products. I'm greeted by HPF events organiser Gerard Scholtz, whose wife, Anuta, facilitates the market. This is no *kerk* bazaar. There are no doilies in sight and the drunken pecorino and

La Vierge's deli is well-stocked with all sorts of goodies



marinated olives beckon. I stock up on homemade ginger beer and organic gooseberries before succumbing to the *spanakopita* which I chase down with HPF's finest at the winery's premium range tasting stall. The Hermanuspietersfontein winery sits at the entrance to the Hemel and Aarde Valley. If you visit the market, sampling the valley's wine is a must. There's Hamilton Russell, Bouchard

Finlayson and Whalehaven, but make a point of stopping off at **LA VIERGE** to enjoy the view and a game of boules on their champagne veranda. Their deli is also well stocked with a selection of local and foreign cheeses, olive oils, preserves, balsamic vinegar and freshly baked cakes and tartlets.

At **FRANSCHHOEK'S LOCAL FARMERS' MARKET**—their gourmet mushrooms, smoked cheddar and organic eggs are really great—I chat to market co-ordinator Carin Geyer. "The market brings people with a passion for quality food together," she says. "People bring their seasonal produce—last week someone arrived with a truckload of cherries—and we have our regulars, who are a bunch of fabulous characters."

Sean Hormann of the **APHRODISIAC SHACK SMOKEHOUSE** in Villiersdorp is one of these characters. 'Likely to lift the libido' is the shack's provocative claim, where you can stock up on smoked white cheddar or try some smoked olive oil. "I'll smoke anything that hasn't moved for four hours," says Sean wryly. "I like to experiment and our smoked butter, olive oil and pasta are fantastic. We use old wine barrel oak to smoke our cheeses and apple wood to smoke the meats." Inspiring.

At **BREAD AND WINE FARM GROCER**, on the Moreson estate outside Franschhoek, chef Neil Jewell's

range of charcuterie deserves to be enjoyed at leisure. Just reading through the charcuterie list is pure sensory indulgence. Neil's cardamom salami is a heady concoction of pork, brandy, green peppercorns and black cardamom. The Old English bacon is rubbed with molasses for a week and dry-cured with coriander, pimento, nutmeg, juniper and pure salt before being smoked. Neil started his love affair with these prepared meat products when he boasted he could make lamb bacon during a night out with a group of Franschoek chefs. "A few days later, one of the guys called me up and asked about the bacon," says Neil. "So I gave it a try. It turned out okay and I was hooked." The deli's wine and charcuterie tasting is a good way to become acquainted with Neil's fare. Italian squashed salami is paired with Moreson's barrel fermented Chenin Blanc, Shiraz with Chalmar smoked beef biltong and Moreson Brut Rosé with saucisson sec. And of course there's also the deli's bread which goes rather well with some Pinotage salami.

The **KLEIN JOOSTENBERG DELI** between Stellenbosch and Paarl is another must-visit if you can't resist all things porcine. The deli's butchery sells pork reared on the estate, available in fresh cuts or as prepared sausages, hams, gammons, salamis and pâtés. The deli itself is a vast wonderland of pantry essentials, luxury goods and homegrown fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Down the road, **FAIRVIEW** in Paarl has come a long way since my student days of foraging for misshapen brie bargains

in the factory shop-style tasting room. These days the farm's deli is slick and stylish, with cheese still the main attraction, of course. You have to pay to sample the estate's generous offerings, but why not? That way you can be forthright in your comments on the merits of goat's milk versus mould cheeses versus camembert, and so on, and then you can make an informed

**'My love for soulful food draws me to farmers' markets and delis like a bee to a honey pot. Fortunately they seem to be springing up all over the country'**

choice when you buy.

At **SPIER**, the deli is the last stop on your way to the estate's lakeside picnic area and provides everything a picnicker's heart could desire, including salads, cold meats, cheeses and bread. What I really love, though, are the plastic plates, knives and forks at the checkout. You really don't have to bring anything along. This is serious no-pain picnicking.

No-pain picnicking is also what the deli menu at **VILJOENSDRIFT** near Robertson is all about. You can create your own picnic basket from the menu and enjoy it on a river cruise or on the deck overlooking the river. Down the road at **ROOIBERG WINERY** on the R60, you can pick up freshly-baked bread and pastries from the bakery at the estate's restaurant, Bodega de Vinho. On the R62, just before

Barrydale, Beate Joubert runs a deli at the **JOUBERT TRADAUW** estate. I am enchanted by the two resident dachshunds who relax at my feet as I enjoy a farmhouse lunch. They follow me when I browse the deli.

Closer to home, there's the **PORTERS ESTATE PRODUCE MARKET** held every Saturday morning in Tokai forest. Everything about this market works—from the flying pink pigs on the logo to the motto 'Any fresher and pigs would fly'. The forest setting is idyllic and you can buy fresh organic vegetables while stocking up on olives from The Olive Station. Stalls cooking breakfast and pancakes go flat out as visitors enjoy their eggs and bacon at open air tables.

Another market which promises to deliver on quality produce and situational charm is the **STELLENBOSCH FRESH GOODS MARKET** to be launched at the end of February. The open air market will be located at Dorp Street square in Bosman's Crossing Trading Village. It promises to be a slow food extravaganza of products sourced, grown, raised, harvested, caught, preserved or transformed by local producers.

Markets and delis crammed with goodies made with care are restorative. In my case they connect me to those flour-aproned domestic goddesses on whose shoulders I teeter. I raise a glass of home-brewed cider and propose a toast to those who have nourished me with soulful food in the past and those whose organic lettuce and smoked bacon helps me continue the tradition in my own kitchen. **GT**