

Dinner and dance

Wining, dining and twirling around with
Back O' The Moon and Neethlingshof

WORDS TRACY LYNN CHEMALY PHOTOGRAPHS
GUNTHER GRÄTER AND SUPPLIED

DE WET VILJOEN WINEMAKER, NEETHLINGSHOF

I grew up on a wine farm in the Worcester area. My family has always been involved in the wine industry and one of my older sisters is married to a winemaker. When I was still at school I used to visit them on the wine farm and I guess the whole lifestyle just rubbed off on me.

I am a huge believer in pairing food and wine. Life is about balance – some flavours in wine are enhanced by food and vice versa. By enjoying food with wine you can drink much more wine!

Before you start out with your own pairing, you need to think the concept through. Drink or taste the wine that you intend to use a day or two before so that you can start playing around with ideas in your head. Do not always go for the suggestions on the label of a wine bottle – rather use your own gut feel. If you intend to serve a certain meal, try and match a wine that you think will work, learning from previous encounters.

Don't restrict yourself to the cliché of serving white with white, red with red – rather play around with the wine's serving temperature. For example, why not try serving fish with a chilled red wine...

If you are going to try a new wine, I would suggest buying at least two bottles of it. Drink one bottle without food and use the occasion to get to 'know' the wine. This will ensure that you don't spoil your meal if you don't like the wine.

The most exciting thing about being in the South African wine industry is that I get to work with people who have a passion for life. South African winemakers are unique in the sense that we share our



secrets with each other and get together on a social basis. The fact that we have a very diverse growing area ensures that we can make a range of wines without travelling the globe.

Neethlingshof is a beautiful wine estate, with excellent wines from nurtured vineyards and people who have a passion for what they do. The Lord Neethling Restaurant also serves exquisite food.

The Lord Neethling Pinotage is made from one of the farm's oldest vineyards and has received many accolades. With age comes beauty and the concept of balance. I love the balances in the wine: fruit, oak, length, complexity and structure.

The awards I'm most proud of aren't mentioned on labels or in wine guides. I'm happiest when consumers drink my wine on a special occasion. My wife and I always celebrate with wine and can still name every wine we had on special occasions. My biggest reward is if someone tells me they had a bottle of The Caracal 2004 for their anniversary.

I always try to make the best wine I can – I will only have 30 to 40 times in my life to do that.

Call 021-883-8988; neethlingshof.co.za



FOOD & WINE

BUDHA MEIRINHO CHEF, BACK O' THE MOON

I've been at Back O' The Moon for nine years. The founder, Dr Felicia Mabuza-Suttle, loves elegance and felt the need to bring an upmarket restaurant to the southern part of Joburg. Like a true New York or Miami supper club, she wanted to make people feel special about coming to a beautiful venue.

People are looking for more than good food. They are looking for a true one-stop entertainment experience, so they come to Back O' The Moon to dine and dance. We cater to various music tastes and showcase various genres, making our clientele very diverse – the true Rainbow Nation.

Many of our international clientele say it compares very favourably, if not better, than most establishments overseas. I've even had the pleasure of cooking for Danny Glover, Pierce Brosnan, Stevie Wonder, Oprah Winfrey and Tom Jones.

I really enjoy the combination of food, people and music, coming from our resident band members Ronnie, Bones, Hayley and Cedrick. Some of our celebrity guests have even surprised us by taking to the stage: Oscar winner Forest Whitaker, Simon Cowell, Randy Crawford, Hugh Masekela, Miriam Makeba and many others.

Our seafood platter is probably our signature dish and it offers a great variety. We also serve the best chicken peri-peri in town and make a mean oxtail.

Our most popular desserts are our homemade malva pudding, mango ice cream and crème caramel.

We have various Mozambican dishes on your menu. Two of our most popular dishes are our Prawns National dish – beer-basted with fresh garlic and chillies and grated onions – and our prawn curry.

I love working with flavours that make taste buds come alive, as well as ingredients that have great medicinal value. It's important in our day and age to rely on the treasures that nature provides us with, such as garlic, saffron, aniseed, cinnamon, coriander, rosemary, fenugreek, ginger, chillies and spring onions.

At food-and-wine pairings

I recommend a crispy South African sauvignon blanc with our fish dishes. For other seafood platters, go for a cold Portuguese vinho verde. Pair meat, such as a T-bone, with a full-bodied South African rubicon, and try a spicy dish with something light – a South African Haute Cabrière Pinot Noir. I love desserts with a cold glass of Lord Neethling Noble Late Harvest from Neethlingshof.

Call 011-496-1423;
backofthemoon.co.za



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To book, call Nicky on 021-700-1020 or email nicky@topbilling.com.

PLACE BACK O' THE MOON RESTAURANT, GOLD REEF CITY DATE 29 OCTOBER '09

TIME 19:00 FOR 19:30 COST R350 (INCL 12-MONTH TOP BILLING SUBSCRIPTION)