



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

Babel, **MARANDA ENGELBRECHT'S** new cookbook, which pays homage to the restaurant she helms at Babylonstoren in the Cape's winelands, is about far more than food — it's the story of an extraordinary place that brings together the work of horticulturists, winemakers, farmers and culinary artists

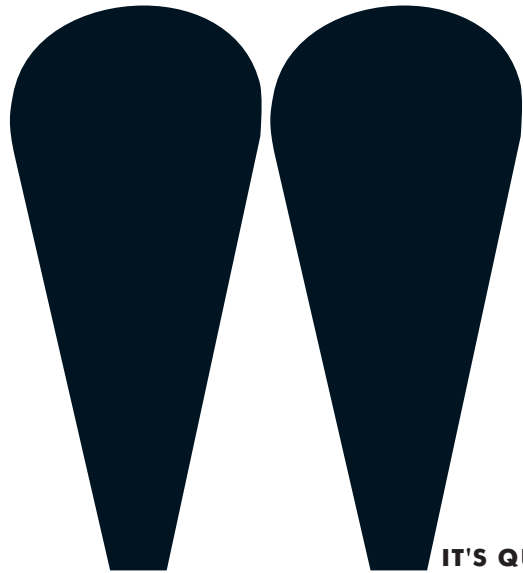
PHOTOGRAPHS **ADEL FERREIRA** RECIPES **MARANDA ENGELBRECHT**



EXCLUSIVE EXTRACT



"DAILY WE CONSPIRE WITH THE GARDENING TEAM TO HEAR WHAT'S READY"



IT'S QUITE SIMPLE: Babel's food is directed by what the garden gives us. Daily we conspire with the gardening team to hear what's ready for harvesting. Everyone at the restaurant, from chefs to hosts, gets the chance to pick from the garden. In this way we're all learning together. Fresh seasonal produce – fruit, vegetables, herbs and edible flowers – forms the heart of any dish. This we combine with protein sourced from surrounding farms, such as meat, fish and cheese. Our style of food leans towards simplicity. We maintain integrity by keeping it whole as far as possible and we play with unexpected flavour combinations and new varieties of fruit and vegetables in every meal. Our cooking is simple, generous and honest and, always, closely tied to its origins in the garden."

– Maranda Engelbrecht

BABEL BREAKFAST TART

We offer a fresh fruit, yoghurt and muesli or granola breakfast – but there's a small twist: it comes in the form of a tart. This is a fun way of presenting it a little differently and new guests are often surprised when it arrives at the table. It's one of our signature dishes.

Combine 250 g of your favourite muesli, granola or toasted rolled oats with 90 g soft butter. Line a loose-bottomed French tart pan with enough clingfilm so that it hangs over the sides. Spoon the muesli-and-butter mix into the base and press down firmly. Fold the clingfilm over towards the inside to cover the tart and place in the freezer. When ready to use, remove from the freezer and carefully remove from the pan. Slide the tart base out of the clingfilm onto the plate. Allow to thaw for about 10 minutes. Top with yoghurt and fresh fruit and vegetables and drizzle with honey. Garnish with fresh herbs or edible flowers and serve. Serves 4

Try these toppings:

- Grated beetroot, yoghurt topped with fresh thinly sliced beetroot, num-num and fresh spearmint with a drizzle of honey.
- Grated carrot, orange blossom and cardamom yoghurt with sliced mango, avocado, carrot ribbons, grapefruit segments, persimmon, pepino, baby carrot and a drizzle of honey or maple syrup.
- Blueberry and cinnamon yoghurt with blackberries, plums, figs, tamarillo, radish, pear, avocado and purple basil.
- Sliced beetroot, strawberries, num-num, pomegranate, radish and purple basil – a drizzle of lime or lemon juice always pulls the flavours together, a rule with almost any dish.

THREE-EGG BREAKFAST ON FIG CARPACCIO

Along with our chicken and duck eggs, we often source quail eggs from a nearby farmer. They have a delicate, creamy texture when cooked. Poach a duck, chicken and quail egg and serve

on freshly sliced fig with a raspberry Hollandaise and smoked vinegar. Garnish with a drizzle of olive oil and fresh mint.

How to poach eggs perfectly

Freshness plays a large role in how successful your poached eggs will be. Fill a deep saucepan with about 10 cm water, add 2 T wine vinegar and bring to the boil. Do not add salt as it produces tiny holes in the egg white. Break an egg into a teacup without tearing the yolk and slide the egg into the water. Don't attempt more than four eggs at a time. Poach for 1 to 2 minutes for a soft egg and 2 to 3 minutes for a medium egg. Remove using a slotted spoon. Place on a clean, absorbent cloth to drain the water. Serve warm. If the yolk is too soft, place it back into the water. If you have to prepare the eggs in advance, cook for 1 minute and place in ice-cold water to stop the cooking process. To heat up, place in hot water for 30 seconds before serving.



BABEL BREAKFAST TART

"OUR COOKING IS GENEROUS AND ALWAYS CLOSELY TIED TO ITS ORIGINS"



THREE-EGG BREAKFAST ON FIG CARPACCIO

EXCLUSIVE EXTRACT



RED, GREEN AND YELLOW SALADS

"WE SERVE SALADS AS NATURE INTENDED: FRESHLY PICKED AND CRUNCHY"

Try poached eggs:

- In classic recipes such as eggs Benedict with Hollandaise sauce, and in Caesar salad.
- With steamed salmon or grilled steak.
- In an Asian broth or soup.
- On creamy potato mash with crispy bacon.

RED, GREEN AND YELLOW SALADS

Devising Babel's menu involves discussion and tossing around ideas. One question we repeatedly ask: how do we keep the garden as the main focus? We decided on our colour groups; and so our famous red, green and yellow salads were born. Sometimes it's the simple things that work. We serve salads as nature intended: freshly picked and crunchy, with a combination of textures and drizzled with innovative dressings. Visually it works well – and tastes better.

For red salads

- **Plum, mustard and lemon thyme dressing** Blend 2 fresh red pitted and chopped plums, 4 t red plum jam, 2 t red wine vinegar, ½ cup olive oil, 1 t English mustard and a few sprigs of lemon thyme until smooth. Season to taste.
- **Beetroot, shallot and raspberry dressing** Blend ½ cooked beetroot, ½ shallot, ½ cup white balsamic vinegar and 2 t honey until smooth. Season to taste and toss through ½ cup mashed raspberries.
- **Oil-free red fig dressing** Blend 6 medium-ripe thin-skinned purple figs, ½ cup white balsamic vinegar, 2 t honey and 1 garlic clove (optional) until smooth. Season to taste.

For yellow salads

- **Nectarine, radish and ginger dressing** Blend 2 chopped yellow nectarines, 1 t pickled ginger, ½ cup sunflower oil, 2 t white balsamic vinegar and 1 t honey until smooth. Season to taste.
- **Roast pineapple, orange and coriander dressing** Roast 4 peeled slices pineapple with a drizzle of olive oil in a 160°C-preheated oven for 10 to 20 minutes, then allow to cool. Blend the pineapple with 2 t white balsamic vinegar, ½ cup sunflower oil, 1 small shallot, 2 t chopped chilli and a few fresh coriander leaves until smooth. Season with salt and a hint of white pepper (bear in mind that white pepper is a lot stronger than black pepper).
- **Oil-free mango, whisky and lemon dressing** Blend the chopped flesh of ½ ripe mango with the juice of 1 lemon until smooth. Add

2 t honey and a dash of whisky and blend again. Season to taste.

For green salads

- **Fresh tarragon and sour cream dressing** Whisk together ½ cup crème fraîche, 2 t French mustard, 2 t verjuice, 1 crushed garlic clove, 1 t chopped tarragon or lemon verbena and 2 t honey (optional). Add a little milk if you want a thinner consistency. Season to taste.
- **Cavolo nero pesto** Blend 2–4 washed small to medium young cavolo nero leaves, 1 small garlic clove and the juice of ½ a lemon. Add enough olive oil to form a runny consistency. Add 50 g grated Parmesan and 50 g toasted pine kernels and blend once more. Season with pepper to taste. Spoon over salad or serve on the side.
- **Avocado and orange yoghurt dressing** Blend ½ peeled avocado, juice of ½ lemon,

1 T yoghurt, ½ cup olive oil, ½ cup fresh orange juice, zest of ½ orange, ½ small onion, 1 t French mustard until smooth. Season to taste.

CHILLED PLUM SOUP WITH PLUM SORBET, CRYSTALLISED BASIL AND BABY BASIL

Place 10 pitted and halved plums in a small saucepan. Add 2 cups water and 100 g sugar. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes. Cool and strain a few times through a muslin cloth. To make the sorbet, blend 10 pitted plums with 200 g sugar syrup until smooth. Churn in an ice-cream machine until frozen. Serve the ice-cold plum soup with a scoop of plum sorbet. Garnish with a sugared basil leaf and baby basil. Serves 4 to 6

ON A PLATE

Food stylist, chef and restaurateur... if you can eat it, you can bet Maranda Engelbrecht has worked it. Here, a glimpse into the formidable mind of a culinary genius...

The first time I saw Babel it was a rundown kraal surrounded by weeds and a few rusty farm implements.

At the time, I thought an opportunity like this comes once in a lifetime.

From the beginning, I wanted to create honest food with an edge.

The one thing I didn't want was to slash fruit and vegetables into small pieces; I wanted to serve them raw or cooked whole.

Creating Babel's menu was a wonderful process, something we shared. To this day everyone gets involved – because of the humanity of food.

What I love most about the menu is that it's not rigid. It evolves all the time as the garden directs, or as we're inspired to try something new.

I never expected to like farming. It changed the way I look at food.

No dish at Babel is complete without fresh garden herbs and edible flowers.

At Babel, we never cook without enthusiasm and anticipation.

Guests can't get enough of Babel's hand-cut potato wedges.

I never knew that you could identify a type of fig by looking at the number of points on its leaf.

I've learnt never to underestimate a donkey.

I never leave Babylonstoren without feeling appreciation.

GIVEAWAY

Far from a conventional cookbook, Maranda Engelbrecht's *Babel* (R390) documents the journey of seasonal food from Babylonstoren's legendary gardens to the kitchen and, ultimately, menu of the farm's popular restaurant. We're giving away three copies of this artfully photographed title, which is available exclusively from Babylonstoren and in selected Woolworths stores. To stand a chance to win one, send your name, physical address and telephone number to TASTE 78/Babel Giveaway, PO Box 440, Green Point, 8051. Or SMS "Taste Babel" and your details to 45606 (R1.50 per SMS). Enter online at www.tastemag.co.za. Terms and conditions apply (see page 124). Competition closes 18 November 2012.



CHILLED PLUM SOUP WITH PLUM SORBET, CRYSTALLISED BASIL AND BABY BASIL