

#6 EAT, SLEEP, SHOP

THE CAPE

More than just a gateway to adventure, South Africa's Western Cape is the country's white-hot center of earthly delights.

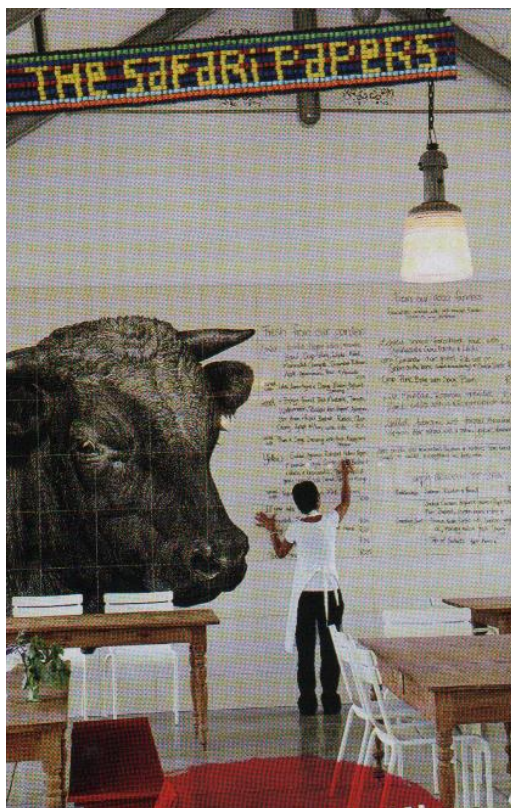


A dish of exotic mushrooms and persimmon from Babel (Babylonstoren), the restaurant's cookbook published in 2012

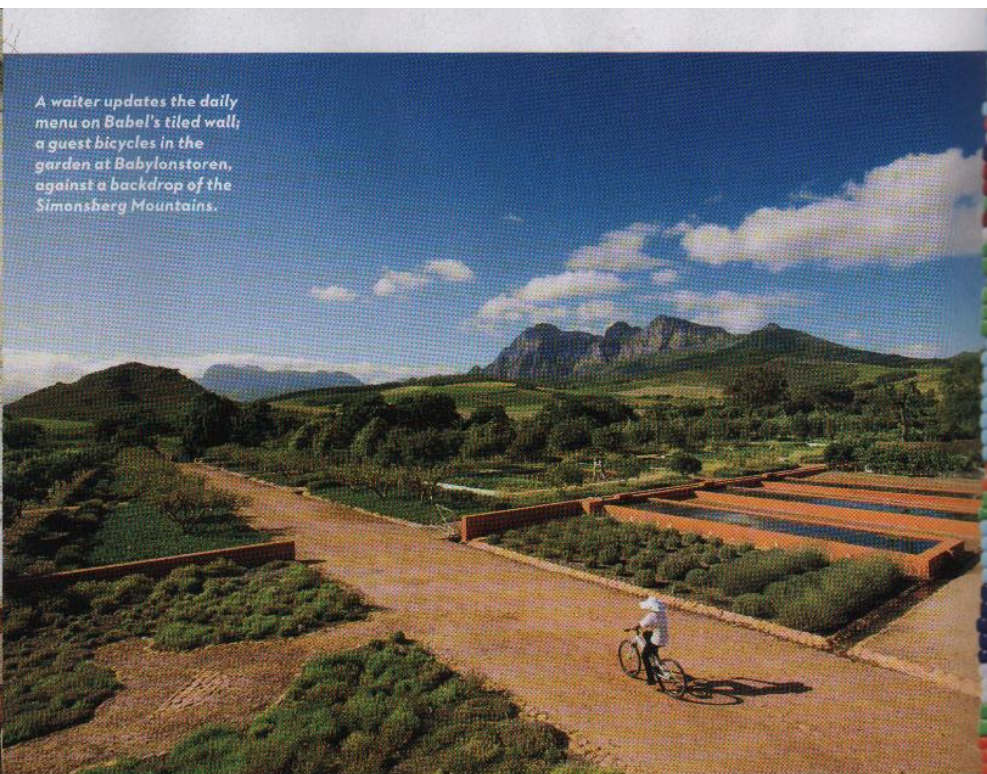
BEGIN WITH *babel*

The locavore restaurant that has the foodie cognoscenti buzzing.

If Thomas Keller lived in South Africa, Babylonstoren would be his French Laundry: an effortlessly stylish, low-key 692-acre hideout in the wine country, where much of the produce served is grown on-site—with its own clutch of cottages for overnighting (rooms, from \$340). The jewel in the crown of Babylonstoren, a 45-minute drive from Cape Town, is its restaurant, Babel, the perfect distillation of Cape Town's casual chic with a



A waiter updates the daily menu on Babel's tiled wall; a guest bicycles in the garden at Babylonstoren, against a backdrop of the Simonsberg Mountains.



BABEL IS PART OF AN EIGHT-ACRE ORGANIC HOLDING THAT HARKS BACK TO THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON.

rustic setting, a produce-driven menu and a top-tier reputation. Owned by Karen Roos, the tastemaking former editor of South Africa's edition of *Elle Décor*, Babel is part of an eight-acre organic holding that—true to its name—harks back to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Prickly pears are ranged in a tight maze, while high walls enclose the almond grove, whose bee-luring trees shade three hives. The smell of onions wafts over the vegetable patch, a mosaic of frilly, rosette-like lettuce laid out in tight rows. Bushy, espaliered apple trees hug the ground, jostling with quince plants, their fruit shiny and hard like yellow marbles.

The bounty produced here is the basis of the menu for the elegant restaurant that Roos conceived (as a longtime design journalist, she even oversees the typography). White metal chairs sit at heavy, rough-hewn wooden tables, the daily menu scrawled in black marker on the white-tiled wall: roasted vegetable skewers, perhaps, or fava bean minestrone, even beef fillet served on some of those fresh-picked onions, gently caramelized. "We try to maintain the simplicity of the Cape Dutch tradition," Roos says. At *Klapmuts-Simondium Rd., Franschhoek*; 27-21/863-3852; babylonstoren.com. —MARK ELLWOOD

THE greenhouse



Celebrated grand chef Peter Tempelhoff calls his tasting menus "progressive South African cuisine." His gastronomic laboratory is the **Greenhouse**, a 45-seat restaurant at the Cellars-Hohenort, a Relais & Châteaux hotel (rooms, from \$290) marooned among ancient camphor trees on the Constantia slopes of Table Mountain, about 15 minutes from Cape Town's city center. Portions are minute, and the flavor combinations unexpected. Try the seared *Du Toitskloof* rainbow trout with slow-cooked octopus and trout crackling, finished off with the caramelized lemon meringue with Earl Grey ice cream (left). At 93 *Brommersvlei Rd., Constantia*; 27-21/794-2137; collectionmcgrath.com. —P.D.