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RESTAURANT PREVIEW

Shaka Zulu: A South African theatre and dining experience

Shaka Zulu Restaurant, Bar and Lounge is poised to open in Camden as the "pinnacle of London's cosmopolitan scene." The fashionable nightspot will offer a dining experience of purely South African cuisine at its best. TALI BARNETT spoke to the restaurant's chef Barry Vera about his revolutionary and mouthwatering menu of South African food and flavours

SPEAKING from "a secret location in London, where we're testing all the recipes", Vera explains that Shaka Zulu will take South African cooking to a new level. This will be "a restaurant to represent South African cuisine at its best, and its entirety. No fusion flavours, no blend of anything, it's true and wholesome South African food."

As head chef, Vera has researched recipes, planned meals and menus, and sourced the most delectable flavours and food at its most fresh and fulfilling. While "doing research on South African restaurants globally", he realised that "nobody has ever taken this project on like this and really represented South African cuisine. But I think you've got some amazing ingredients and dishes if you look back at the history of South African cooking."

A mouth-watering menu

Vera explains that the upper level of the restaurant will be all about seafood. The meat and the seafood "are done how you would do it in South Africa, in the Cape." The menu will include grilled seafood, kingklip and crayfish from SA, and a "rooibos smoked salmon."

The downstairs area will focus on South Africa's amazing meat. "We've got seven hour spit roast with Karoo lamb- we'll brine it for 24 hours, then we will marinade it for 24 hours, and then it will be slow roasted on the spit for seven hours. With that we serve the chakalaka - a beautiful, spicy, vegetable relish."

Shaka Zulu will be making its own biltong and chutneys in-house. The strong, gamey flavour



of SA meat like springbok and ostrich will be accompanied by these chutneys, such as a mint chutney with boerewors.

For dessert Vera will go beyond the usual SA choices. He has taken the sago pudding that he "hated as a child" and transformed it into a "beautiful sago pudding with Madagascan vanilla, condensed cream and a rosewater syrup."

There are also 98 wines on the menu, all of which are South African.

The taste of home

When people taste Shaka Zulu's food, Vera wants

them to say "I remember this as a child, or my mom used to make it." For him, that is what food is about: "it evokes memories. I think for South Africans that come to Shaka Zulu, it will remind them of home in every way, and for people who might have been to South Africa or want to go, it will also give them that experience."

Reminiscing about a recent braai with friends in South Africa, Vera says "it was lovely- we had some beautiful wines from Constantia, some boerewors, some great beef, and the chutneys... it was beautiful, and for me that was South Africa. It was perfect." www.shaka-zulu.com



ABOUT SHAKA ZULU

Shaka Zulu is set in a 27,000sqft, three-floored location in Stables Market, Camden and will boast a Cape Town inspired Fish Bar and Cocktail Lounges, overlooking an incredible African theatre and dining experience.

60ft carved wooden murals will cover every inch of Shaka Zulu's walls and ceiling, while a 30ft hand shaped bronze statue will guard the entrance.

The main restaurant will present The Shaka Zulu Theatre of Food - diverse cuisine from all parts of South Africa and beyond. Open flame grills will show a world-class kitchen and chefs. Throughout the evening, guests will entertained in a truly sensory experience with live music, dance and special scheduled theatre-style floor shows.

For reservations call 0203 376 9911