

## EATING

# top picks

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It's a wonder that all those Capetonians look so svelte on the beach because this is one damn delicious city to dine in. The best of Cape Town's restaurants and cafés are on a par with those of other far larger and more cosmopolitan cities, and its top chefs – Harold Bresselschmidt, Luke Dale-Roberts, George Jardine, Bruce Robertson and Franck Dangereaux – can stand shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Gordon Ramsey, Charlie Trotter or Jamie Oliver.

The magazine [Eat Out](http://www.eatout.co.za) ([www.eatout.co.za](http://www.eatout.co.za)), an annual restaurant guide to South Africa, covers the latest dining news; the website has a searchable database of reviewed Cape Town eateries. Even better for independent reviews and sprightly criticism of Cape Town's restaurant scene is [Rossouw's Restaurants](http://www.rossouwsrestaurants.com) ([www.rossouwsrestaurants.com](http://www.rossouwsrestaurants.com)).

## SPECIALITIES

It's by the sea so, as you'd expect, seafood is a particular Cape speciality. You can try many types of fish here that you're unlikely to find at home, such as kingklip or the meaty snoek – it's been described as mackerel on steroids but is delicious barbecued (or *braai*ed as they say in these parts). There's also deliciously fresh crayfish and *perlemoen*, which you may know better as abalone. In many places you'll see 'line fish' advertised – this means the catch of the day.

The Waterfront, Kalk Bay (with its marvellous fish market) and Hout Bay are all good locations for seafood feasts. However, before ordering, make sure what you're eating isn't on the endangered list (see [p146](#)).

If you're looking for something more unusual, try traditional Cape Malay cuisine (see [opposite](#)). The staple for most blacks in the township restaurants is rice or *mealie pap* (maize porridge), often served with a fatty stew. It isn't especially appetising, but it's cheap. The same goes for the *smilies* (sheep heads) that you'll see boiled up and served on the streets. Other dishes include *samp* (a mixture of maize and beans), *imifino* (mealie meal and vegetables) and *chakalaka* (a tasty fry-up of onions, tomatoes, peppers, garlic, ginger, sweet chilli sauce and curry powder). For our pick of African restaurants and cafés serving such dishes see [p139](#).

Traditional Afrikaner cuisine shows its Voortrekker heritage in foods such as biltong (the deliciously moreish dried beef and venison) and rusks, perfect for those long journeys into the hinterland. *Boerewors* (spicy sausage) is the traditional sausage and plenty of recipes make use of game; some include venison, which will be some type of buck.

For the skinny on cookery courses where you can learn how to prepare traditional Cape Malay and African dishes, see [p232](#).

## WHERE TO EAT

There are places to suit practically everyone's taste and budget, from fabulous delis (see [p144](#)) and organic food markets to temples of haute cuisine. Fast-food options are common and include the internationally known [Nandos](http://www.nandos.co.za) ([www.nandos.co.za](http://www.nandos.co.za)), which purveys spicy Portuguese-style *peri peri* chicken. With both the sea and fruitful farmlands on hand, you can be pretty much assured of fresh, top-quality ingredients wherever you eat.

Most restaurants are licensed but some allow you to bring your own wine for little or no corkage. Call ahead to check the restaurant's policy. Smoking in restaurants is permitted in Cape Town but usually there will be a separate room where smokers are seated.

Many bars serve excellent food; see [p150](#) for some recommendations. Wine estates can also offer excellent restaurants or pre-packed picnics – see [p192](#) for more details.

## PRACTICALITIES

### Opening Hours

Cafés and restaurants generally open daily, the former serving food from 7.30am to around 5pm. A few places (more usually in the City Bowl) will be closed on Sunday or occasionally Monday. Lunch service generally runs from 11am to 3pm, with dinner from 7pm with last orders at 10pm. Variations of more than an hour from these times are listed in the reviews.