

Riverside dining at Vergelegen's new pop-up restaurant

Vergelegen Wine Estate in Somerset West has launched its latest pop-up restaurant named The River Café, housed in an elegant glass marquee located on the banks of the Lourens River, which flows through part of the estate.



Source: Arno van der Vyver. Supplied

The restaurant menu is inspired by this riverside setting, the kitchen garden and the estate itself, and focuses on the use of fresh, local ingredients.

“Our aim has been to create a relaxed lunch experience near the water’s edge, with the flow of the picturesque river beside you creating the natural music and ambience. The feedback has been terrific, it’s definitely giving guests something truly special – the restaurant setting, plus the food offering that complements the breathtaking scenery,” says executive chef Michael Cooke.



Source: Arno van der Vyver. Supplied

Menu highlights

Key dishes are fish and seafood such as whole roasted trout, Saldanha Bay oysters, prawn cocktail, smoked Franschoek trout and West Coast mussels.

Ribeye steak caters for carnivores, while vegetarians can enjoy a caprese salad of buffalo mozzarella, tomatoes and basil, or gem squash ravioli with parmesan cream, leeks and sage. Rosemary fries are available on the side, while dessert options are strawberry meringue or citrus tart with a gingerbread crumb. Service is super-friendly.

“The whole roasted trout is certainly the standout menu item, as it fits perfectly with the restaurant’s location on the banks of the Lourens River,” says Cooke.



Source: Arno van der Vyver. Supplied

Vergelegen's recently launched, limited edition rosé wine – the first rosé from the 321-year-old estate – has been a popular choice on the wine list, says sommelier Christo Deyzel. A rose-gold colour, with a dewy aftertaste, the wine is named 'Florence' after Florence, Lady Phillips, owner of the estate with her husband Sir Lionel Phillips from 1917-1941.

To give an indication of prices, the whole roasted trout is R185, mussels R120/R180 and oysters R28 each/R165 for 6/R330 for 12. The Florence wine is R150 per bottle.



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Says Vergelegen MD Wayne Coetzer, "Covid-19 has forced many restaurants to change the way they operate. We set up our first pop-up, the Nguni Café, in our Nguni cow pastures for the month of August. It was a great success and a wonderful reward for our staff, who have remained strong and motivated despite all the challenges of the lockdown.

"We are delighted with the response to The River Café since it opened in September, and plan to continue welcoming guests here until the end of March next year."

The River Cafe accommodates 30 guests in the marquee and 40-50 guests on the veranda and deck, weather permitting.

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