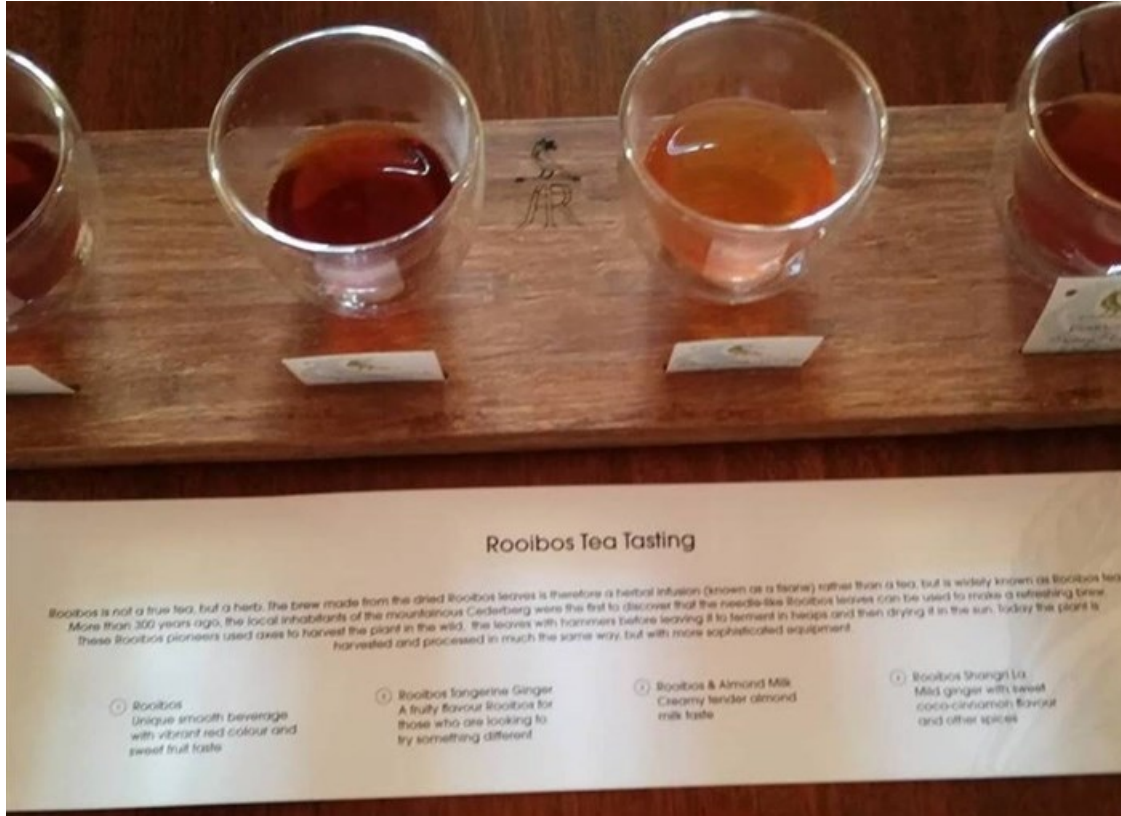


Getting your healthy on in Franschhoek

By [Nicci Botha](#)

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Think Franschhoek. Think wine and food. Right? After all this *dorpie* at the foot of Africa is true to its Gallic heritage of *joie de vivre*. But what if you're looking for other, a tad less indulgent, options? All was revealed on a recent health and beauty media day organised by the [Cape Winelands District Municipality](#).



Rooibos tea tasting

Healing plants

First stop was the Franschhoek Medicinal Herb Garden. This spot of tranquility is tucked between the more frenetically paced wineries, eateries and boutiques on the main drag. It is the domain of Judah James, who is a walking encyclopaedia on the healing properties of the indigenous plants he tends.

Before you ask. Yes, there is a cannabis plant or two. Strictly for medicinal purposes, of course.

Judah may also offer you a swig of tea made from buchu leaves, a type of fynbos renowned for its anti-inflammatory, antiseptic and general cure-all properties. The taste though leaves a lot to be desired.

Taking tea

Our next tea tasting was at the other end of the scale. The manor house at [Anthonij Rupert Wines](#) has been refurbished to reflect the understated elegance of its heyday in the mid-1800s. There's a rose garden outside the entrance, which in full bloom must make for a spectacular show of colour and scent. On the side of the house, you'll find a herb garden, the fresh pickings of which are used in the adjoining kitchen.



Delectable high tea morsels

We partook of our tea in the dining room overlooking rolling lawns. The offering was rooibos - another uniquely South African plant. We started off with a cup of the plain stuff, then tried samples with almond milk (think marzipan), tangerine ginger (zingy and citrusy), and Shangri La (sort of Asian inspired with hints of ginger again, coco, cinnamon and spices).

Though not totally within the realm of healthy, we did try a few tasty tidbits from the high tea menu (@R195), namely the smoked salmon roulade blinis, a decadent chocolate ganache concoction and a raspberry eclair. All eye-rollingly delicious.



Secret find: Look on the window panes facing the garden. On one of them you'll find the name Mrs E de Villiers and a date going back to 1838 (I think). She was the wife of one of the original owners of the farm and she apparently marked her place in history with a diamond ring on the glass. And it's still there, nearly two centuries later!

Cuppa Joe

Then it was back to the high street for some of the strong stuff. In this case, coffee.

There is nothing like the aroma of freshly brewed coffee to perk (get it?) up your mood. [Terbodore's](#) on-site roastery is just to the left as you approach Big Dog Café. No doubt, you've seen this artisanal brand of the shelves of Woolies and other retailers, but this is the heart of the operation.



Explore the labyrinth at Big Dog Cafe

Head roaster, Jommo should make YouTube clips on coffee. His passionate lecture on bean blending is an experience on its own, as is the tasting. After a demonstration on the art of brewing coffee, we tasted renderings of the single origin Honduras coffee as espresso, a cappuccino and cold brew on the stoep, where the resident Great Dane (and Terbodore trademark) has his own couch.

Again you get a chance to revel in the beauty of another garden. The one behind Big Dog Cafe has a charming maze-

stroke-labyrinth and interesting mosaic and stone animal statues.



Find your serenity at Santé

Far from the madding crowd

Stop number four, and our lunch venue for the day, took us on a dusty and bumpy road to [Santé Wellness Retreat and Spa](#).

You'll need more than a fistful of Randelas for this experience, but you are treated like royalty. You may want to indulge in some alone-time in one of the 31 individually decorated suites or curled up on one of the loungers with a good book, but the spa treatment menu are just too good to ignore, with everything from manis and pedis to one of the most relaxing back massages I've ever had.



Baby greens and curried cauliflower

Talking of menus, this isn't your one-lettuce-leaf-and-a-glass-of-tepid-water type venue. It's wholesome food at its best. We started off with a salad of baby greens and curried cauliflower, yummy tomato soup and butternut bread and olive

tapenade, followed by a choose of grilled salmon or stuffed chicken with fresh veggies, and rounded off with a sour fig coconut ice-cream and thyme praline and burnt banana. Sublime!

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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