

DECEMBER 2, 2025

WHERE TIME SITS DOWN TO LUNCH: A DAY AT SIMON'S RESTAURANT

Morning mist slides down Table Mountain in a cool, silvery spill, as though the great flat-topped giant has exhaled in its sleep. The Constantia Valley receives it the way an old friend accepts a borrowed scarf — casually, without fuss. The air smells of damp soil, distant sea breeze, and a vague promise of sunshine. And wedged beside the historic manor house of South Africa's oldest wine estate is the real reason many visitors drift into the valley: Simon's Restaurant, a place where nostalgia, indulgence, and a surprising amount of sparkle meld into something unforgettable.

A Dining Room with Ideas Above Its Station

From the outside, Simon's is perfectly polite — white gables, generous shade from the oaks, all very Cape Dutch and well-behaved. But cross the threshold and the restaurant reveals its true personality, which is... enthusiastic.

Mirrors shimmer in every direction, multiplying the room into a hall of culinary possibility. Chandeliers drip crystal with the emotional intensity of a soprano nearing her final aria. Gold accents wink from corners you didn't know were corners. There is even a grand piano that seems one flick of a switch away from bursting into *The Entertainer*.

It is as if someone took the decorum of the estate next door and thought, "Yes, but what if it also had ambitions of starring in its own late-night cabaret?"

The Menu: Theatrics on the Walls, Restraint on the Plate

For all its flamboyant interior design choices, the kitchen at Simon's is almost monk-like in discipline. The food doesn't shout; it doesn't preen; it simply arrives with quiet confidence and the unmistakable aura of fresh ingredients treated with respect.

The famed grilled Kingklip appears. It's a white, glistening fish fillet that seems to glow under the chandeliers. It's served lightly wrapped in a lemon, sumac and almond crust, resting on a bed of herbed mash, with confit balsamic cherry tomatoes, spring onions and sautéed vegetables. The fish has flaky flesh that yields to a fork with the softness of torn silk. A brush of lemon-fynbos butter — delicate enough not to intrude, fragrant enough to conjure the nearby coastline — finishes the dish. It tastes like the ocean when the wind is behaving itself.

Other dishes follow this same thoughtful approach: local produce presented generously but without bravado, seafood served as though the chef personally escorted it from the harbour, and desserts that feel like a gentle handshake rather than a sugar ambush.

I settled for the carrot cake — Simon's version is designed with moist softness, earthiness, with a comforting after-dinner feel. Spices and aromatics like cinnamon, nutmeg, with hints of citrus/orange and a few ground nuts complement the sweetness of the carrots and give depth rather than just sugar.

Given Simon's restaurant's tendency to balance elegance (in its décor) with straightforward, ingredient-sensitive cooking (as seen in the simply prepared kingklip dish), their carrot cake is likely more refined and restrained rather than overly decadent — honest ingredients, balanced sweetness, and a comforting, gentle finish.

If the walls are wearing sequins, the food is wearing linen.

Between Bread Plates and Afternoon Light

When lunch ends, the restaurant opens out into the warm hum of the afternoon. Through the windows, you can spot the estate drifting into its siesta-time drowse. Somewhere behind the vines, a tractor murmurs with the contentment of machinery that has seen worse days.

A butterfly floats across the lawn with no particular destination in mind. And then, in a delightful break from restaurant protocol, a waddling delegation of white Pekin ducks march toward the terrace. They gaze up at diners with the practised sorrow of creatures who have never once missed a meal but are nevertheless skilled in the art of appearing tragically unfed.

It is hard to take life too seriously with ducks performing soft-shoe routines outside the door.

Should You Wander

If you do step out after lunch, the valley is spread around you in neat green rows — vines, mountains, sea air blown in from the horizon. The estate's shop glints nearby, lined with bottles that look as though they've been curated by a gemmologist.

But Simon's remains the beating heart of the visit: a place where history hums quietly through the walls while the chandeliers shimmer with unrepentant glamour.

Leaving the Valley

By mid-afternoon, the light has turned honeyed and forgiving. The courtyard smells faintly of crushed grapes and warm stone. Cape Town's bustle waits somewhere beyond the hills, impatient as ever. But for a moment longer, the restaurant door closes gently behind you, and all that remains is the sense that you've dined somewhere suspended — not in time, exactly, but in mood. A place where the menu whispers of land and sea, and the décor belts out a show tune. Simon's is more than a restaurant. It's an experience: half theatre, half kitchen, entirely memorable.

W: Simons

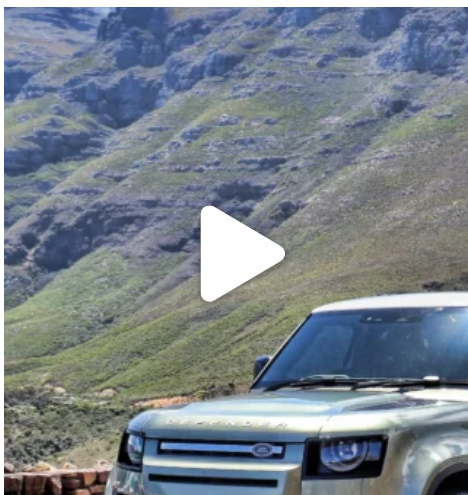
W: Groot Constantia

W: Cape Tourism

Written by Cindy-Lou Dale for Luxury Safari Magazine

VISIT WEBSITE

INSTAGRAM @LUXURYSAFARIMAGAZINE



Load More

Follow on Instagram

NEWSLETTER