

Singita

Singita is Reinventing Food on Safari



20 September 2017 - Working collectively with award-winning Cape Town-based chef Liam Tomlin, Singita is taking safari dining boldly into the future. With reconceptualised menus at the South African lodges, guests can now experience a unique culinary circuit, with varying flavours and cooking techniques inspired by the setting and style of each lodge and also driven by sustainability best practices. This includes plenty of fresh, local ingredients that even well-travelled guests may not have experienced - such as gemsbok, kudu, Saldanha Bay mussels, kingklip and waterblommetjies. The gourmet transformation also includes a brand-new setting for the Singita School of Cooking in the Kruger National Park and also a new kitchen and grill dining experience at Singita Boulders Lodge planned for 2018.

The evolution of Singita's food culture all started with the reopening of Singita Lebombo Lodge in the Kruger National Park in May 2016. As part of the redesign, a new show kitchen was introduced, kitted

out with cutting edge, energy-saving technology. 'It's an interactive space flooded with natural light – almost like a stage – and has a glassed-in, temperature-controlled pastry kitchen as well as a private dining space for cookery lessons,' explains Liam. Liam's trademark tapas forms the basis of the relaxed dining style inspired by Lebombo's chic, contemporary spaces. Following its redesign this year, Singita Sweni's new glass-walled kitchen provides the ideal platform for Liam and Singita Kruger's Executive Chef Andrew Nicholson, to introduce a range of experimental, artisanal cooking techniques reflective of the global food scene. Lunches at Singita Sweni comprise of eight different dishes, featuring cooking techniques such as char-grilling, smoking, curing, marinating, pickling, fermenting and wok firing. In the evening, a sharing-plates menu highlights the five different tastes - umami, bitter, salt, sweet, and sour - and encourages daring wine pairings. According to Liam, this ties into the trend for provenance and the art of perfecting one thing and doing it really well, and is the thinking behind the new food culture at Singita Sweni.

At both Singita Sweni and Lebombo, the bar has become a sociable hub where guests may order coffee from the barista, a freshly pressed fruit and vegetable juice or a cocktail showcasing one of South Africa's artisanal spirits. The introduction of sleek, self-serve deli fridges, replenished with freshly prepared sweet and savoury snacks throughout the day, has given guests the freedom to eat when it suits them. From Liam's perspective, the most radical shift in thinking has been taking the routine out of eating, commenting: 'guests can now eat anything at any time, so that the experience of being at Singita is not that different to being in an airline's first-class cabin.'

In South Africa's Singita Sabi Sand Reserve, Dylan Pitallo was recently appointed as Executive Chef of all three Singita lodges and has since heralded an array of gourmet changes. Inspired by the African design of Singita Ebony Lodge, the menu is a celebration of the best of Africa and the spice routes with bold North African and Middle Eastern flavours. Moroccan tagines for two have become a feature on the dinner menu while lunches are simpler and include plenty of fresh, local ingredients. In 2018, Singita Boulders will also have a new kitchen along with a classic grill house-style dining experience inspired by the lodge's quintessentially African, almost primal atmosphere. Nose-to-tail specialities, including ox tail and tongue, prime cuts of venison and grass-fed beef, and freshly flown in seafood, including whole fish, will complement vegetables prepared on the grill and plenty of interesting side dishes. Meanwhile, at Singita Castleton – a country-style, exclusive-use house - the focus is still on sharing generous platters of modern comfort food brought to the table to encourage sociable, relaxed meal times.

A NEW ERA FOR THE SINGITA SCHOOL OF COOKING

A key part of Liam's role since joining Singita has been mentoring the Head Chefs and their teams at the various lodges. 'It takes time to build a food culture,' he says. He is putting long-term strategies in place, layer by layer. 'While strong chefs are important, striving for excellence starts from the ground up.' With this in mind, the existing cookery school will be replaced by a brand-new Singita School of Cooking. It will be constructed behind Lebombo's new kitchen in the style of a demonstration studio. 'The demo studio has the potential to become a guest experience too,' says Liam, who also envisages students eventually cooking for guests once a month. Ten candidates selected from the communities will embark on a 12-month curriculum that has been carefully rewritten by Liam and the head chefs. They will be spending time learning the basics in Lebombo's staff canteen, followed by stints working in the five lodge kitchens in South Africa and being taught the various modules of the curriculum in the cookery school's demo studio. Equipped with culinary skills and hands-on experience in high-level kitchens, graduates should have the know-how and confidence to apply for a commis chef position in any professional kitchen. 'In eight to 10 years' time, hopefully we will have nurtured and developed a new generation of head chefs,' concludes Liam.

Singita Sweni Lodge – Reopened August 2017. Rates for the brand-new Pool Suite at Singita Sweni Lodge start from R54,600 per night. Includes full-board basis, twice-daily Land Rover safaris, walking safaris, mountain biking, archery, kitchen cooking demonstrations, and return road transfers between Satara airstrip and the lodge.

Note to Editors:

Singita

Singita is a conservation company preserving African wilderness for the past two decades. Through an exceptional safari experience with 12 award-winning lodges and camps across South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, Singita is able to partially fund the protection and preservation of pristine land and existing wildlife populations, not to mention help create economic independence within local communities surrounding the reserves.

Press Release

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