

Whimsical White Room is a winner

 By [Ruth Cooper](#)

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Theatrical yet honest, chic yet simple, oh so sophisticated yet still relatable, sounds like a bit of a tricky contradiction to balance; however The White Room at Dear Me manages to embody all these adjectives and more. The perfect special occasion-type restaurant, The White Room is a tasting experience to savour for a lifetime.

Conceptualised and run by award-winning chef Vanessa Marx, the simple-yet-elegant The White Room acts as a blank canvas for her creative confectionaries and consummate culinary creations. The menu is seasonal and only utilises local and organic produce and ethically sourced proteins. Currently, a five- or eight-course menu is on offer with the choice of an added wine pairing. We were treated to the five-course meal with wine pairing last Friday night.



Destination deliciousness

As the restaurant is so intimate, only about eight tables or so, and diners pretty much all follow the same menu, it really becomes a shared journey of deliciousness, appreciative hmms and mhhms are often heard as each new dish is ushered in. The service is attentive, efficient and friendly; one feels like the dance of waiters, sommelier, hostess and chefs is a well-rehearsed one, a smooth flow of soft-footed feet and quick smiles.

Tasty bread with butter, olive tapenade, coriander pesto and a chilli salt were the first morsels set before us. Mhmm, I'm still dreaming about that creamy tapenade, hands down the best I've ever had cross my lips. Followed by an amuse-bouche of crispy fried risotto balls nestled on a chilli cream cheese-type base. Yum.



The first course was a choice between a pork terrine with orange and a vanilla vinaigrette, or raw and cured cod with sprouts and chilli and lime. I chose the pork, a really startling flavour combination: the vanilla definitely has a strong presence and sweetly enhances the pork while the orange adds a touch of necessary tartness to the dish. However, I think I may have enjoyed the sneaky bite of my partner's cod a soupçon more: fresh, light and zingy I wished I could have sneaked more than one nibble. The pork was paired with the beautifully labelled 2013 Thorne Daughters Rocking Horse, while the fish got bubbles with the Colmant Brut Reserve.



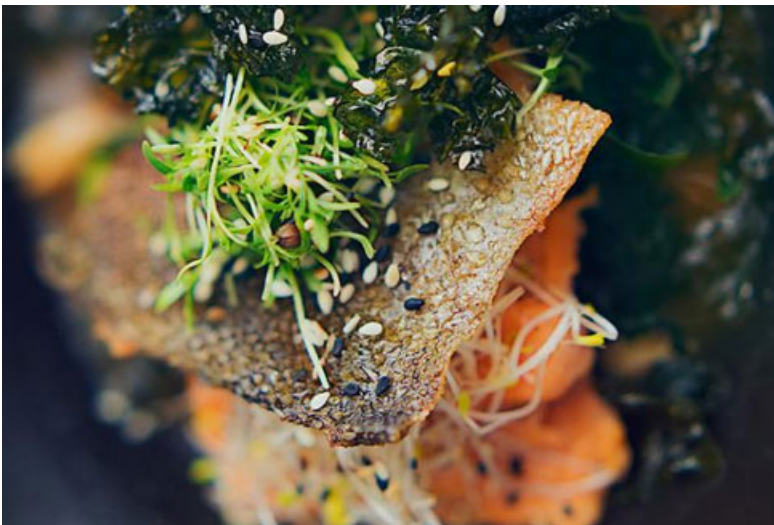
A veritable vegetable victory

The Vegetable Garden, second and prettiest dish of the menu is a celebration of all things vegie. Tiny baby carrots, beetroot, brussels sprout, mushrooms and crunchy broccoli fonds are accompanied with truffled soil and a courgette and mint velouté. Each vegetable is lovingly honoured, simply prepared but excellently assembled and presented. This course was served with the crisp 2010 CWG Cederburg Semillion.



The third course was a creamy and al dente seasonal risotto; ours was an asparagus one accompanied by the 2009 Crystallum Pinot Noir. This pairing at first baffled us as we felt a white wine might better complement the lightness of the risotto; however, after a few sips of the Pinot Noir it all became clear: the slightly earthiness of the wine brought out a depth of smokiness in the risotto, a match made in foodie heaven.

The main course was a choice between poached trout in Japaneesy-type broth with sea lettuce or S'Kaap tjoppie (lamb chops), slaphaskeentjie (small pickled onions), buchu and spekboom. I headed east on this one and chose the Japaneesy trout, which was served with Hakutsuru Draft Sake while my partner kept it local and chose the proudly South African lamb, which was complemented by the 2011 Thelema The Mint Cab Sav. The dishes were distinctly different but both lauded clear and distinct flavours that did the best justice to the fine ingredients.



Oh dear honey

Saving the best for last, the acclaimed Caciotta panna cotta dessert with honeycomb was served with the 2013 D'Aria Lullaby. Having experienced this dessert at the Eat Out Awards a week before I knew what to expect; however I have to say the one at The White Room was far superior. Not surprising when you consider 800 had to be made at the awards as opposed to the handful served that night. As the panna cotta is surprisingly salty, the balance of honeycomb, pumpkin seeds and freeze-dried raspberries has to be spot on. Under the eyes and taste buds of Vanessa this fine balance was perfectly achieved. Adding a little drama to the evening she served all diners the dessert, wheeling a trolley with the actual honeycomb to each table and personally drizzling warm honey on each of the dishes. A lovely touch to end a lovely evening.



If you want to experience unique fine dining with a touch of whimsy in a relaxed and welcoming environment, then look no further than The White Room. Situated just off Long Street, with the vibey Tjing Tjing bar above and homely Dear Me brasserie below, this is a restaurant that can't be beaten when it comes celebrating all things decadently foodie.

The White Room is open for dinner on Thursdays and Fridays. To make a reservation, go to www.dearme.co.za or email info@dearme.co.za.

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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