

How fine-dining chefs, restaurants are making the most of the Covid-19 lockdown

Like most other industries, the fine dining restaurant business has had to migrate online to keep busy, stay in touch with customers and support their kitchen teams.

Lockdown is changing up the traditional aura of mystique that often pervades fine dining. Some of the country's top chefs are taking to social media in an informal and informative way, no longer distant figures presiding over professional kitchens, but approachable online friends. Unable to share their love of food by cooking for their customers directly, they have found innovative ways to keep the conversation flowing, often with relaxed cooking demonstrations on Instagram videos. And food-loving fans are turning to them for flavour and inspiration in their lockdown lives.



Bertus Basson

David Higgs looks to Instagram

Chef David Higgs of Marble and Saint restaurants (Eat Out S.Pellegrino Chef of the Year 2013, who has also served as a mentor and judge for previous years of S.Pellegrino Young Chef) was one of the first celebrity chefs to play with informal videos even before lockdown kicked in. He started out using #whatsinmyfridge on Instagram to give tips to followers on what to make with what they had and soon started doing casual demos. "I realised that people wanted simple stuff and it has to be fun. Not too many ingredients and not too serious," Higgs says.

Restaurant customers are loving the opportunity to see the personality behind the brand, really getting to know chefs in person at home with all their quirks. "With time on my hands I'm going back to the things I enjoy," says Higgs. "I did drama at school and cooked at home in front of my camera. I can be spontaneous. Cookery is a spontaneous act – this is who I am. The me you meet at the restaurant is an adaptation."

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[View this post on Instagram](#)

Donning my new outfit of yellows and mustards. 🍷🍷🍷🍷 @scotchsoda_sa

A post shared by [David Higgs](#) 🍷🍷🍷🍷 (@davidhiggscchef) on Jun 10, 2020 at 7:45am PDT

” These are my clients from Marble, who now have more time on their hands and are coming online. I have been able to talk to them in a more personal way, take them into my home, meet my dog, everyone now knows Carlos! This whole period has been special to me. A reset.”

His new YouTube channel Dave’s Kitchen is a natural progression, and he is selling his lockdown recipe book – Mile 8 – to raise funds to support his kitchen team until his restaurants can re-open.



Introducing 'Quarantine Cuisine'! Catch these 6 SA chefs online during #SALockdown

Ruth Cooper 2 Apr 2020



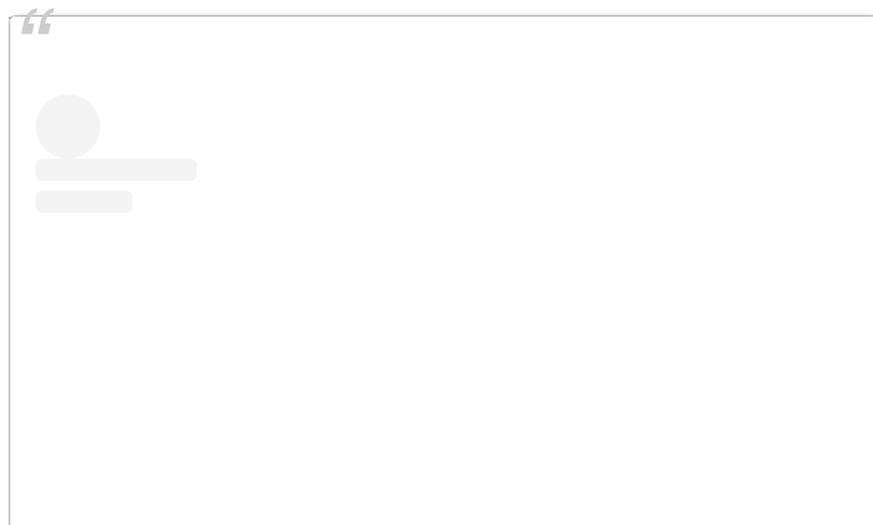
Kerry Kilpin produces videos

Chef Kerry Kilpin of Steenberg’s Tryn and Bistro Sixteen82 has loved sharing recipes in off the cuff home-cooking videos, demystifying and simplifying her much-loved cooking style. Of what inspired her she says: “My love for food and wanting to connect with the guests that frequently visit Bistro 1682 and Tryn. It was a fun challenge cooking home-style food with limited ingredients. I’m so used to having an open pantry full of ingredients, I had to rein myself in and think like a home cook. I loved sharing with people how versatile cooking is, you don’t have to always use everything the recipe says. You can adapt recipes to what’s in your fridge!”

She cooks at home, often has to change up her recipes to what she has available because the lockdown shop queues were too long. She injects her love for spices, sauces, fresh Asian flavours and her signature generosity of flavour and spirit, into real-life cooking that is accessible to all of us. “I think keeping top of mind and our presence out there was the initial aim of the videos. We didn’t want people to forget about Steenberg. We’ve had a nice interaction with our guests which helped to keep me and my teams motivated during this difficult time.” The videos have transitioned nicely into the Steenberg @ Home dining deliveries, with guests happy to now have Kilpin and team do the prep work for them.

Bertus Basson prefers human interaction

Bertus Basson, of Stellenbosch restaurants Eike, Overture, Spek&Bone, De Vrije Burger, and Eat Out S.Pellegrino & Acqua Panna Chef of the Year 2019, has shared a flurry of down to earth videos, including glimpses of his family and pets, from his home kitchen through the lockdown. Lately, he’s been focussing on his love for potatoes, with tips on how to make potato rosti for breakfast, or the best-mashed potato ever – cue extremely lavish quantities of butter, cream and olive oil. It’s all about flavour and homely South African tricks, cooking eggs to go on his potato rosti he says: “Aromat on fried eggs... it’s South African law!”





[View this post on Instagram](#)



A post shared by Bertus Basson (@bertusbasson) on Jun 11, 2020 at 3:03am PDT

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ties in need together with various other Stellenbosch chefs and organisations, and developing two menus for home dining boxes, one from Eike and one from Overture with changing weekly menus. For these, he makes videos from the restaurant kitchens demonstrating the few easy steps needed to put the finishing touches to the three-course meal at home, which gives a personal touch and interaction to the dining experience, your chat with the chef guaranteed. He also might rock up with your home delivery, as he, his wife Mareli, and other chefs are all kept busy doing deliveries. And since Level 3 allowed alcohol sales they have turned Spek & Bone into a wine shop selling bottles from their cellar together with coffee shop takeaways.

We've all been starved of human interaction and food beyond our limited repertoires during lockdown - these and other similar initiatives are feeding our souls and keeping chefs and restaurants close to our hearts until we can return to dining out.



#Covid19: Stellenbosch chefs set up soup kitchen to feed needy communities

11 May 2020



Fine dining delivers

Pre-pandemic, no-one would have conceived of fine dining take-aways being possible, but as lockdown eases levels several of South Africa's finest are dreaming up new possibilities for home deliveries, in a bid to save their restaurants, keep their staff in work and their customers in spoils. La Colombe, currently SA's number one restaurant, delivers a nine-course Dine-In Experience; The Test Kitchen offers a sumptuous Hamper C with meals and treats for four people for four days; Fyn tempts tastebuds with a winter experience menu that changes fortnightly and GM Jennifer Hugé has created cocktail kits featuring some of their famous drinks to be enjoyed at home, all while listening to the Fyn playlist on Spotify. So food-lovers can now celebrate special occasions at home in fabulous style.



Get fine-dining deliveries from these 5 Western Cape restaurants during the lockdown

Ruth Cooper 28 May 2020



50 Best for Recovery Programme

While all these commendable efforts are keeping individual restaurants ticking over in the short term, long-term recovery is something close to the heart of the World's 50 Best restaurants and their founding donors S. Pellegrino and Acqua Panna. They have launched a three-pronged global recovery programme. This encompasses fund-raising for their Recovery Fund to provide financial relief where possible starting with a 50 Best 'Bid for Recovery' Auction in June, offering food lovers the opportunity to bid for out-of-this-world gastronomic experiences from the restaurants and chefs featured on the most recent list. They are building a resource of digital content to help restaurants with advice and support, and are hosting a virtual summit in September to gather the global gastronomic community together online to share learnings, promote best practices and explore visions of a post-pandemic world for restaurants and diners.

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