

Q&A

A TASTE OF TUSCANY

Executive chef Andrew Mendes of Camps Bay's Tuscany Beach spends his days creating delicious meals, but it's the simple things in life he really craves

What is the must-try item on the Tuscany Beach menu?

There are two dishes you have to try. The first is the crayfish thermidor. It is superb. We take all the meat out of a crayfish and sauté it before it is flambéed with cognac. Then we add onions, white sauce and just a hint of saffron, put the filling back in the crayfish shell, top it with some cheese and then bake it for 30 seconds. It's heavenly.

The second dish is a 280g fillet served with baby jacket potatoes tossed with butter, dill and coriander, and squashed into a cake form. The fillet is then topped with a jus made from seasonal berries (at the moment it is a mixture of raspberries, gooseberries and blueberries).

Do you get on well with your staff?

They respect me. I'm hands-on, not the kind of chef who sits in an office all day. I am in the kitchen doing the work, not standing around giving orders.

Why is Tuscany Beach so popular?

It's relaxed and casual, yet is well managed and the service is excellent. We also have the finest cocktails and an extensive menu that includes pizza, pasta, fish, meat and much more, so there's great variety. There's also a lot of passion here.

Do you have a sweet tooth?

Yes, I have 32 of them! For dessert we have a trio of chocolate mousse at Tuscany Beach. It's topped with chocolate ganache and served with a berry compote with mint and honey. It's a very sexy dessert and I love it.

Do you cook at home?

I work long hours and don't get much time off. I usually get home after midnight and don't want to start cooking then, so

it's normally a toasted cheese for me. But if I'm entertaining then I love to prepare food for my guests.

What is your favourite thing to eat?

I love a nice piece of steamed fish. It's very versatile and you can eat it any time. I love a piece of cob or kingklip, wrapped in a vine leaf with white wine or garlic sauce.

What do you like to do other than cook?

I like to go out with my friends, relax and watch DVDs. I also enjoy jogging and working out at the gym (I have one in my garage).

What makes you happy?


A good woman with a big heart and lots of understanding. After that I would say having time off to be with my friends and family.

What makes you angry?

Dishonest, untrustworthy people. I deal with those kinds of people a lot in my line of work.

What is the best meal you have ever had?

Two stand out for me. One was a confit of duck platter at Haiku. The duck had an orange sauce and you could just taste how much care had gone into making it. I often recommend Haiku as a fine-dining option.

The second meal was at the old Ginja. We had lamb shank with a rich reduced demi-glace. It was fabulous, the ambience was amazing and the evening was perfect. 

Tuscany Beach won the overall Gold award at the 2009 Diners Club Winelist Awards. For more information, call Tuscany Beach on ☎ 021 438 1213 or Diners Club Concierge on ☎ 0861 DINERS (346377).

