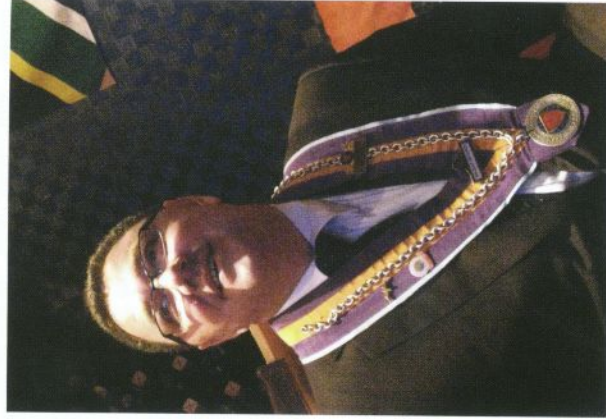


An interview with Bradley Brouwer

South Africa A Vibrant Cultural Land

By Astrid de los Rios



Much has been said about the emergence of the Far East as a core tourism market for South Africa and there has been a waning of demand from most European markets. The recent appointment of Bradley Brouwer as South African Tourism Country Manager for Japan and Korea seems timely. He is sure to have a dynamic effect on the industry.

Brouwer has spent his entire career in the hospitality and tourism industries, including five years as Marketing, Sales and PR Director of Forever Resorts and Chairman of the Mpumalanga Chapter of the Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (2001~2005). As an accomplished professional and chef, he was inducted as a Maitre Hotelier of the *Chaine des Rotisseurs* in 2002.

Here he talks about tourism, business prospects and, of course, food and drink.

How did your interest in cooking begin?

Cooking is creative, and even as a small boy I felt it was fun and interesting. At 16, I was given the chance to ice a 3-tiered wedding cake. I did it so well that

landscapes and the only Green Canyon in the World. And each of our eleven different cultures contributes to the nation's vibrant cultural mix. Last year about 32,000 Japanese travelled to South Africa and the numbers continue to grow. The FIFA World Cup in 2010 is also approaching fast. We have an open skies policy and the official carrier will be Emirates Airlines, hopefully flying directly from Narita. If the route proves sustainable, Emirates will continue operating it. South Africa is also open for business and foreign investments. In the restaurant sector, for example, we will happily welcome more Japanese restaurants.

How about the problems of distance and security?

The long haul flight is one of the main challenges. The answer is to increase the average stay to ten - twelve days, and provide wider-ranging experiences. There's also a perception of widespread crime in South Africa, but my advice to Japanese Travelers is you are a Tourist once you leave Japan for any other destination and with this comes caution when traveling. Japanese tourists don't like to be left alone, so staff should be available and visible at all times.

And the Japanese market for South African products?

I plan to open the channels of communication between the Japanese

market and South African product owners. I attend many conferences in Japan to keep abreast of the market's requirements and trends, and I encourage product owners to send me their information so that I can diffuse it through the right marketing channels in Japan.

Could you give us a general idea of South African food?

It's really basic good food but extremely healthy. South Africans love fresh ingredients, especially fruits, vegetables and herbs, and they don't like to use prepared sauces or dressings. I think this is one reason why South African food is popular with the Japanese. We also like to consume the water in which we've boiled our vegetables; you'll never find a South African chef throwing it away. It's used for everything from seasoning to sauces.



What cultures have influenced South African cuisine?

There have been various ethnic influences on our gastronomy, including



Malay, Dutch, French, Portuguese and Italian. The mixture of the early Dutch and Malay cookery is known today as 'Cape Malay Dutch' cuisine. It's an aromatic style of cooking unique to South Africa. The early European settlers in the Cape grew a variety of European vegetables and fruit and cooked mostly in the Dutch style, using a pot over an open fire. 'Potjie' as it's called in Afrikaans is still part of South Africa's culinary tradition.

Malay slaves began to arrive in the Cape Colony in the late 17th century. With them new and more skilled fishing techniques arrived as well as a myriad of spices. They brought with them aniseed, star fennel, turmeric, cardamom, ginger and malasis, the spice mixtures typical of Indonesian culture.

Because of the proximity of the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola, Portuguese cuisine also had a great impact, in the form of garlic,

onions, bay leaves, fresh coriander, paprika, red sweet peppers and spicy chilli-based seasoning—all items that all go well today with our ever popular 'braais' (barbecues).

Could you tell us about some special South African dishes?

Boerworse are sausages with a unique flavour made from mostly beef, some liver and spices, and sometimes cheese is used. Another interesting dish is pap a maize meal, this is a staple diet in South Africa for many, and Babotie usually served with rice and home made fruit chutney; it consists of mild curried minced meat and on top a layer of scrambled egg, with raisins, cardamom, and cinnamon. Ostrich meat is also popular, usually eaten as carpaccio or steak—a very rich flavour, but fat-free and few calories. Another unique product is the 'African potato', which resembles a coconut. It has properties that are believed to

strengthen the immune system of HIV sufferers. And if you eat them regularly, it's said your life span will lengthen!!

How about desserts?

Very popular all over Cape Town is a dessert called Meekert or Milk Tart. It's a sort of thick custard that takes over an hour to prepare. It's made from milk, cinnamon and sugar and is served with a coolis of fresh berries and passion fruit, or an Amarula liqueur.

There's a type of South African tea, right?

Yes. It's called Rooibos and it only grows in the Northern Cape. It's extremely aromatic, healthy and biodegradable, it contains no caffeine and less tannin than tea, and it's also used to produce an excellent jam and skin care products.

How about South African wines?

Along the route from East London to Cape Town you can visit no fewer than 250 wine estates. There are 18 established wine routes and various sub routes where daily wine tasting and cellar tours are conducted most of the year. Our chardonnay grapes are picked with the dew still on them, which adds to the flavour of the wine, and we have good rosés as well. Our sparkling wines, such as Cap Classique resemble a good quality champagne but are very affordable. In fact, most South African wines are reasonably priced. I would

recommend the full bodied Guardian Peak Shiraz with a slightly smoky bouquet and Mompooer peach or plum brandy, which is perfect for using in sauces.

I really hope Japanese suppliers will start importing larger quantities of South African wines. Import regulations are very severe especially when compared with entry to other markets. The amount of paperwork required even for one bottle is ridiculous!

For instance this November at Johannesburg WINEX DeToren fusion 2005 was voted best red wine on show. It is purple black in colour and tastes of sweet ripe fruit with the freshness of rose petals, cinnamon and hints of licorice. It is a classic but muscular style and much in demand already worldwide. Once again the excellence of South Africa's wines was brought to the spotlight.

Brouwer has successfully portrayed a vision of South Africa from its scenic skyline to its gastronomy. Indeed South Africa is a vibrant nation, with a vast population, each community contributing to all areas of life, from wines and diamonds to art, medicine and a fairer political and social way of life. There is no doubt that we have not heard the last of the man who will lead the South African tourism industry to the forefront.

South Africa's official tourism website:
www.southafrica.net