

MAY 30 2008

FINANCIAL MAIL

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Under the whip

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EATING OUT - CAPE

Nuts about this place

When I spot unusual dishes such as chicken and pistachio ballotine and braised pig's trotter on a menu – not that this is exactly an everyday experience – my foodie heart jumps for joy. Which is why I am so taken with unexpectedly located newcomer Bizerca Bistro. And I'm certainly not alone.

On a square behind the Cape Town International Conference Centre, a short walk from Adderley Street, this is a pared-back eatery that delivers much more than it promises. Not least because its owners, Frenchman Laurent Deslandes and his SA wife Cyrillia (née Van der Merwe) are seasoned restaurateurs. In fact, the reason they've given their new enterprise this name is that they were called "*bizerca*" (berserk) by their friends for returning to SA after 17 years in France and Australia.

I've been to Bizerca Bistro only at midday – it's also a popular breakfast and dinner spot – and so tended to keep my choices light. The small menu is beefed up by a chalkboard of specials, which usually include a couple of interesting salads – those that use that underrated (by all but our health minister) but delicious vegetable, beetroot, are highly recommended – as well as savoury tarts.

The aforementioned ballotine (R85) is a staple, though its accompaniments change: on the first visit, they included soft white polenta; on the second, a bed of baby carrots, chick peas, fennel and lemon preserve. Another winner is butternut gnocchi with tomato coulis and parmesan (R75) and lamb ragout (R92).

Next time I go – which I'm set on doing – I aim to be more adventurous. Perhaps I'll try slow-roasted pork belly with stuffed cabbage, roasted parsnip and sauce Robert (R82) or lamb tagine with almond and raisin couscous (R88). And, of course, I'll sin and go for one of Bizerca's seductive desserts; soft-centred chocolate pudding with white chocolate crème brûlée (R42) sounds ruinously delicious.

The Deslandes may be "*bizerca*" for having come back to problem-ridden SA, but Australia's loss is Cape Town's gain.

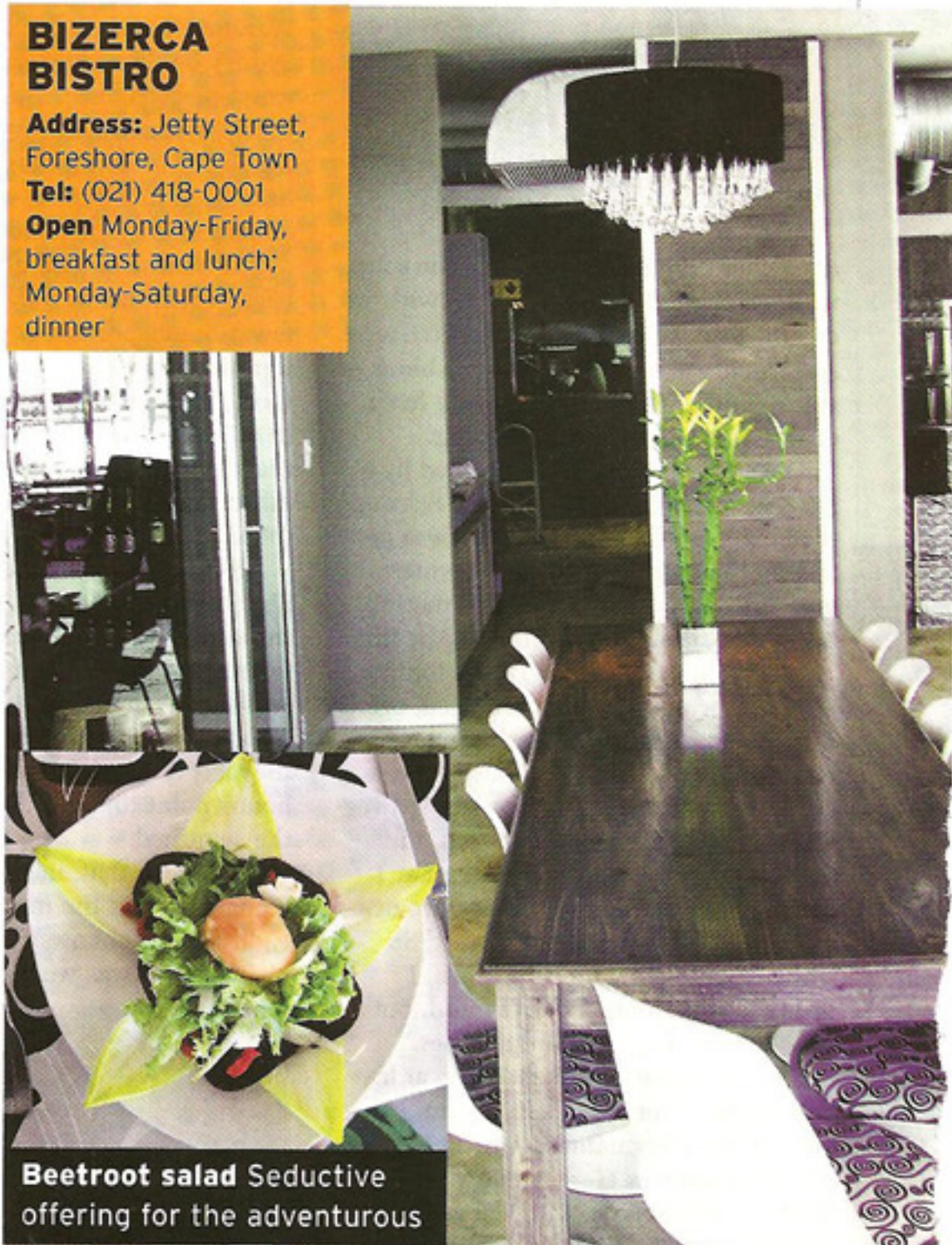
Linda Stafford

BIZERCA BISTRO

Address: Jetty Street, Foreshore, Cape Town

Tel: (021) 418-0001

Open Monday-Friday, breakfast and lunch; Monday-Saturday, dinner



Beetroot salad Seductive offering for the adventurous



Laurent and Cyrillia Deslandes
Australia's loss is Cape Town's gain