



A Dinner Date with History

Cloete's Restaurant at The Alphen Hotel

A fascinating 300-year old history, combined with a top-class menu and excellent service, make for a unique dining experience in the heart of the Constantia Valley.

Text: Nicky Furniss | **Images:** © The Alphen Hotel

In the past three centuries since Alphen Manor House was built, it has played host to many a distinguished guest. Lord Kitchener, General Smuts, Queen Frederika of Greece and Nelson Mandela are just some of the well-known guests who visited what has been known for hundreds of years as one of the great historical houses of the Cape. Now, a whole new generation of guests are able to experience the best of Cape hospitality and gracious dining at the Alphen's signature restaurant, Cloete's Restaurant.

Part of the original 18th century manor house, the restaurant derives its name from the family who has owned the property since 1850, and whose ancestors sailed to South Africa with Jan van Riebeeck in 1652.

Guests have a choice of three dining rooms in the restaurant – the gracious Agterkamer that seats 45 people, the French-inspired Heerenkamer that can accommodate 35, and the intimate 10-seater Cullinan room. All three rooms can be booked out separately for functions and boast a host of beautiful antiques and artworks. Remarkable 18th century furniture, a beautiful

yellowwood and stinkwood screen, and 18th century paintings are just some of the treasures that the family have collected over the years.

The gracious staff clearly has a love for the historical manor house, and are happy to regale guests with stories of its original inhabitants, its visitors, and their antics – like the famous pistol duel that took place during the 19th century between Captain Josias Cloete and Dr James Barry (staff surgeon to the garrison of the Cape of Good Hope). Luckily both missed the other. The cause of the duel was thought to have arisen over the affections of a particular lady – although this was soundly refuted when upon Dr Barry's death it was discovered that he was in fact a woman!

The terrace leads out to the gardens surrounding the manor house. The property's 11 acres of pristine Constantia land tempt visitors to partake in a gentle amble around the grounds, or serve as a beautiful backdrop for lunches and teas. In the evenings, the restaurant is equally appealing with old-world charm and candlelight, lending itself to the ambience.

The menu, which includes such

tempting dishes as coriander and cumin rubbed lamb rump, and prawn and grapefruit salad, promises something for everyone – so much so that making an eventual choice between all the delicious-sounding options on the menu, is perhaps the only taxing thing about having dinner in this gracious house.

A dinner at Cloete's Restaurant, overlooked by its centuries-old ceilings and accumulated family treasures, is certainly like having a dinner date with history – only with better cuisine!

The Alphen Hotel is part of the Queensgate Hotel & Leisure Group. For more information contact +27 21 794 5011, email reservations@alphen.co.za or visit www.alphen.co.za.

