

BREAKFAST, LUNCH, & DINNER

Chef David Higgs' Favourite Joburg Food Spots

Ever wondered where the country's top chefs go for a bite to eat? Or what they drive? *Signature* spent a couple of days in the company of renowned restaurateur, Chef David Higgs, to discover his 'other' favourite eateries, and another one of his passions...



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Restaurateurs must find it somewhat intimidating when celebrity chefs arrive at their establishments for a bite to eat. Especially so, when the chef in question is one of South Africa's most famous. After all, this MasterChef judge and multiple winner of the *Chef of the Year* accolade, is more than a master of his craft, he is immersed in food and in life with a passion that few will ever experience.

The thing is, though, that David has no airs and graces about him. Although he counts many remarkable honours – such as being a longstanding ambassador for iconic luxury motoring brand, Mercedes-

Benz – David possesses the inimitable ability to beguile even the haughtiest of food snobs, and just enjoy a decent meal, with decent company, at a *lekker* place.

What makes some restaurants more memorable than others, I ask David. "It's about the people, mainly," he quips, "and about the food, of course, but first it's about the hospitality that people experience at a restaurant. Too often restaurateurs forget what hospitality means, and when people don't have a nice experience at a restaurant, no matter how great the food is, they will never come back."

While several restaurants embody this attribute for David perfectly, we only had the time to visit one spot each for

breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Three special places that truly deserve their thumbs-up from Chef David.

BREAKFAST @ SALVATION CAFE

Burrowed in the eclectic Bohemian escape that is 44 Stanley in Milpark, Salvation Cafe (and Deli) is a local favourite brunch hang-out, and one the best kept culinary secrets in Johannesburg. Proprietor chef, Claudia Giannoccaro, who spent many years travelling and sailing around the world as a chef, finally made landfall in South Africa, her home country. Being half Italian, food and passion are in her blood, and through her food, Salvation Cafe tells the story of her travels, with a lot of passion.



The vision behind Salvation Cafe is simple: to be a local favourite neighbourhood cafe that attracts people from afar, by consistently serving good food, with good service and good vibes.

With her background as a private chef, Claudia likes to keep things exciting with the specials menu. Specials can be driven by the seasons, but also by trends or themes in food. Whatever it is, Claudia likes simple food where the ingredients speak for themselves.

The menu is kept deliberately quite small, to better control quality, and while Claudia makes it clear that “every dish is somebody’s favourite”, a few items absolutely stand out, including my favourite; eggs benedict. Breakfast duos (sweet flapjacks and savoury benedict), and the breakfast burritos, are also recommended.

Although Chef David and I spent the better part of two hours reminiscing about old times, relaxing with great coffee at is bound to become my new preferred breakfast breakaway, he draws my attention to a statement that perfectly encapsulates the guiding principle of this culinary gem: “We lost our hearts to the ocean; the stars

guided us home; in food we found salvation”.
www.salvationcafe.co.za

LUNCH @ CROFT & CO.FFEE

The suburb of Parkview is known for its family-style neighbourhood eateries. One such exceptional spot, Croft & Co. is located on the bustling corner of Tyrone Avenue and Ennis Road in the heart of Parkview. It is the ideal spot to detach from the daily hustle of the outside world, whether you grab a coffee to go, or sit down for something to eat, there is a strong sense of community here, which is precisely what draws Chef David to Croft & Co. “The cycling community specifically love coming here,” David explains as I sip my second (rather excellent) cappuccino.

The owner, Grant Ravenscroft, who owned Scusi many years prior, in the same location, has been a restaurateur all his life. Shortly before the national lockdown, Grant moved Croft & Co. to the corner spot from two stores up, and refurbished the space to its current sophisticated, yet easy and welcoming space.

Touted as offering a space for the local community to meet up with their





friends and family, do some work, or grab a delicious cup of coffee or something wholesome to eat, Croft & Co. is somewhat of a landmark in the area. Both the breakfast and the lunch menu is quite small, and the ambience is very much café style. Expect delicious yet wholesome fare, all made from excellent ingredients, while still being easily managed and prepared, as Croft & Co. is often a quick stop for people on their way to work or having a meeting.

Although you can also enjoy a hearty breakfast at croft & Co. - the scrambled eggs with bacon is recommended - our lunch stop consisted of the Brisket on Rye sandwich that is fast becoming a firm favourite for the midday lunch-goers. www.croftandco.co.za

MARBLE

It might seem an obvious choice for Chef David to select his own flagship restaurant, Marble, as his favourite dinner spot. Yet, we don't need to rely on Chef David's word alone to know that Marble remains one of the most important restaurants in Johannesburg, if not in South Africa.

Although Marble had experienced similar hardships as a multitude of other restaurants, Chef David's fervour to raise the Marble name once more, is one of the many reasons why patrons return to savour his culinary prowess, over and over again.

Situated in Keyes Art Mile, the growing art and food hub of Rosebank, Marble Restaurant boasts a grand wood-fired grill, imported from Grill Works located in Michigan, as the focal point of the restaurant. The concept combines the open-fire trend seen internationally with an added dose of good South African flair.

"Marble embodies South Africans' love of cooking with fire, a quality that makes our food culture different from the rest of the world," says Chef David. And this is not only evident in the food, but also in the dramatic environment that has become a Marble trademark.

While my conversations with Chef David Higgs occurred some time before the reopening of Marble at the beginning of September 2020, his excitement to get back to cooking was already palpable. "This has been a really tough time for everyone, but we want to get back to work. It's going to be awesome to reconnect face-to-face with everyone, and reignite all the relationships we've made. In a way, it's going to be almost spiritual to relight the fires - it's almost four years to the day we opened Marble, and two years since we opened Saint," says Higgs.

Diners Club Members are invited to book a table of four or more to receive a special dinner treat at Marble. 🍷

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