

Yum Yum indeed

A vibey restaurant with an urbane menu brings a bit of the city to Tzaneen,
writes ***Bridget Hilton-Barber***.

Once upon a time, a restaurant menu offering a simple *café latte* would have caused confusion in the sub-tropical town of Tzaneen – “*latte*” also being the Afrikaans word for long, slender blue-gum poles. These days, however, local palates have been trendied right up. Many good folk here have now been exposed to tapas, ostrich steak *tartare*, cream of biltong soup, *risotto* balls and other previously unimagined fare.

And they're loving it

With its contemporary fusion menu, bistro style and charming atmosphere, Yum Yum has brought an urban touch to Tzaneen and altogether changed its culinary landscape. It's been a Godsend to ex-urbanites like me who are in constant search of a good *cappuccino*, and others longing for a break from that stodgy, old-fashioned meat-and-chips routine.

Since this lovely little deli opened last year, it's been murmuring with the contented chatter of visitors and the gentle trickle of water features. Yum Yum has become the spot for coffee-and-newspaper breaks, light lunches, very long lunches, girls' lunches, birthday lunches and casual-meeting lunches. It's also a handy little stop for small gifts and *tuisnywerhede* like chilli sauces, jams, peanut brittles and the occasional, rather interestingly-named, chocolate salami.

Yum Yum also hit the spot recently by staying open on election day and Freedom Day and was filled with lots of smug looking diners with black ink marks on their thumbs.

I voted for their roasted beetroot salad with goats' milk cheese rolled in Ethiopian *dukkah*, with spicy pecans and honey mustard dressing. My visiting Gauteng friend put her provincial cross next to the smoked trout salad with an Asian-style tamarind dressing and sesame seeds. We both agreed the *crème brûlée* was delicious and presented with a great sense of occasion.

Yum Yum was started by head-chef Jonathan Taylor, one of the founders of Alôn, a Christian lifestyle centre overlooking the purple mountains of Modjadjiskloof, near Tzaneen.

Alôn's occasional restaurant, called Mosaic, became popular among locals for its innovative décor, astonishing views and excellent menu, especially their lamb shank which was talked about from Haenertsburg village in the Magoebaskloof mountains all the way to Letsitele Valley in the Lowveld.

Yum Yum started out as a tapas deli, but changed its menu this year to become more substantial and diverse. Their current menu features assorted salads and New York-style quiche for light diners, and for those after something heartier, delicious gourmet burgers, beef burger on *ciabatta* with mozzarella and red onion marmalade, and fillet steak done with a creamy pepper brandy sauce. A great in-between option is their Cajun calamari with crumbed *risotto* balls or one of their daily line fish dishes.

Yum Yum has a modest but tasteful wine list, and also serves a range of cordials and iced teas, as well as a fab coffee menu, made out of coffee grown at Alôn. Alôn's organic vegetable garden also provides much of the fresh fare.

On the dessert front, Yum Yum tempts with things like caramel chocolate tart, smashed meringue with berries and Amarula cream (another – famously homegrown Limpopo product); and date and macadamia carrot cake.

- 61H Boundary Street, Tzaneen; open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4ish; and Tuesday and Saturday evenings. Contact them on 015-307-3984 or 083-625-6515.