

5 Rooms awakens the senses

 By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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In the valley of the Constantiaberg Green Belt in Cape Town, you'll find a gem of a place, The Alphen Hotel. Hidden within is the intimate 5 Rooms Restaurant at which I recently had the privilege of dining.



Historic treasures

Just one step into the 17th century historical treasure and intimate space of 5 Rooms was all it took for me to be convinced that this was going to be a gratifying evening of good food and wine.

I entered into this grand building and was welcomed by the big-smiles of the friendly staff whose warm and welcoming presence is what I always look for when entering an establishment of this nature. This to me is just one of the many little things that set the mood for a memorable experience.

With it being a warm summer's evening, I opted to rather sit outside to take in the dusk and sip on some wine while enjoying the sweet melodies floating through the crevices of the old manor house.

The restaurant is made up of five rooms, a unique layout that makes for a cosy, intimate atmosphere for you and a partner, or for small groups. The vintage feel to the interior is refreshing and relaxing after a tough day at the office.

The very attentive waiter frequented the table from time to time, offering a top-up of wine or enquiring if the table was ready to be treated with the chef's culinary specialities.

Starters

After an extensive run-through of the starters and mains on offer by the enthusiastic waiter (Let me add that she mentioned what was not available on the menu that night. There is nothing worse than placing your order and 10 minutes later your waiter says that specific item is not available - and asks that you place a different order), I eventually decided to go with the Queen Prawns as my starter. Now, not everybody can cook an exceptional prawn, so I always have my reservations about this, but the waitress noted I made a good choice as this is quite a popular starter. I then started to have my doubts, but when I was served the 6 Queen Prawns served in lime, paprika and peri-peri dressing, I knew I made the right choice!



Queen Prawns, served in Lime, Paprika and Peri-peri dressing

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The overall taste is one of real freshness - the amalgamated flavours of the ingredients were in my opinion spot on! The prawns aren't overshadowed by too much dressing. If you're a little cautious of the paprika and peri-peri infusion, don't be

afraid because the prawns are served with a dash of coleslaw like salad on the side to take the edge off the spiciness, adding to the overall presentation of the starter. To be honest, if I could have had the queen prawns as a main, I would have indulged in it all night.

Try something new

As a main, I settled for the Pan-seared Norwegian Salmon. This was not an easy choice as I was torn between this dish and the Rib Eye steak. Again I trusted the waitress as she was already right about the starters. So I went for something other than my norm.



Pan-seared Norwegian Salmon

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My meal was served on a creamy white bean and clam broth with roasted peppers and Chipotle Aioli. I have no words to describe how good it tasted. From not knowing what to expect to finishing my entire meal. I'm often not a big eater, but it was just too good not to savour every mouthful. Whether you're a fan of salmon or not, this dish was exceptional. The portion sizes are spot on and the aroma so tantalising.

I took a friend along who always offers a good recommendation and eats out quite often with international colleagues - he went with the Grilled Lamb Chops. I happened to say: "Oh, don't be so boring. Try something new!" That must have been the wine talking...

The Grilled Lamb Chops served with Hummus, Feta, Olives, Baby Spinach and mint Yogurt looked scrumptious. What do you think?



Grilled Lamb Chops served with Hummus, Feta, Olives, Baby Spinach and mint Yogurt

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I never got around to tasting the dish as this is one place to which I will definitely come back, and to experience the live music entertainment on offer as well. Unfortunately, there was no live band that night as they only perform on weekend evenings, so I suggest you enquire about who's playing when.

Last but not least

Obviously, your night isn't complete unless you've had dessert. Luckily, I still had space in my tiny belly to fit the Praline Mousse Tart. Now, I am not a big sweet tooth, but I just had to indulge in something sweet to end my night off. Could you say no thank you to this?



Praline Mousse Tart

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This layered tart served with chocolate ganache and hazel nuts reminded me of being a kid in a candy store again. It became more of a *want* than a *need* and from now on I will try and have dessert wherever I go!

Try for yourself

I've come to realise that for good quality food and service you are going to have to pay a good price, so take note, 5 Rooms is not your average restaurant but more of an experience worth trying. This is more of an 'occasion restaurant' where you go to celebrate an anniversary, a special birthday, or even a proposal.

The 5 Rooms Restaurant is at the Alphen Boutique Hotel, Alphen Drive in Constantiaberg.

Go to www.alphen.co.za, where you can discover some of the other special gems they have to offer.

ABOUT EVAN-LEE COURIE

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