

PAIGE'S PAGE

The August Edit

Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • Dessert • Drink • Foodie
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HANG TEN

Somewhere between an omelette and a soufflé, and frankly better for it.



You can actually hear this **omelette** being whisked into submission before it reaches the table, and the result is ridiculously light, fluffy and almost soufflé-like.

But it's what's tucked inside that gets me: those deeply caramelised onions bringing this gorgeous sweetness, mushrooms, just enough melty mozzarella, then crispy onions over the top because apparently one type of onion simply wasn't enough. Sweet, savoury, soft, crispy, cheesy without becoming a cheese bomb. I crave this thing far more often than I'd like to admit.

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PHO HOUSE

For when choosing between pho and sushi feels unnecessarily restrictive.



This **chicken pho** has officially ruined me for lesser bowls. The broth still has that beautiful lightness you want from pho, but with actual depth behind it: fragrant, savoury and properly comforting rather than politely flavoured water. The rice noodles have just the right amount of chew, while the roasted chicken is ridiculously tender, with that seasoned, almost brined flavour running right through it. Add a few pieces of beautifully fresh, uncomplicated **sushi** on the side and, quite frankly, why choose? This was my perfect little lunch of the month.

Breakfast • **Lunch** • Dinner • Dessert • Drink • Foodie
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EL BURRO

Come for the tacos. Stay because somebody ordered another margarita.



There are very few situations a good **taco** and a spicy pineapple margarita can't improve, and El Burro has both down. Their freshly pressed corn tortillas have that gorgeous earthy corn flavour and slightly coarse texture that instantly reminds you what a taco should taste like. The **jackfruit** is my weakness: sticky, sweet, smoky and almost pulled-pork-ish, with pineapple cutting through all that barbecue-y goodness. Then the **chicken** goes completely the other way: charred, juicy, zippy with lime and chilli, and cooled down with avo and crunchy slaw. Two very different tacos, two of my favourite bites of the night. Add a spicy pineapple margarita and frankly, dinner has done its job.

Breakfast • Lunch • **Dinner** • Dessert • Drink • Foodie
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MISCHU

A croissant and a cookie had a baby. I was late to the party, but I'm obsessed.



I know, I know. I arrived embarrassingly late to the **crookie** trend, but apparently I've been wasting valuable time.

Crack through that crisp, buttery croissant and the middle gives way to warm, ooey-gooey cookie dough and melted chocolate chips, while the cookie baked over the top gets all golden and crisp around the edges. So you get flaky, buttery, crunchy, gooey and chocolatey in one gloriously excessive bite. Pair it with one of Mischu's famous cappuccinos and suddenly being late to a trend doesn't feel so bad.

Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • **Dessert** • Drink • Foodie
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DARK HORSE

For after-work drinks, after-dinner drinks, after-date drinks... honestly, just drinks.



I'll find an excuse to end up at Dark Horse, and their **Whiskey Sour** is a pretty convincing one. It leans a little sweeter, which I actually loved, with that frothy top, citrusy tang and enough whiskey warmth underneath to remind you that, yes, this is still very much a cocktail. But half the fun is where you drink it. Rooftop if the weather behaves, pavement-side for premium people-watching, perched at the bar, or sunk into one of those loungey booths when one drink inevitably becomes another. Throw in a few of their small plates and suddenly "just one after work" has become an evening.

THE LITTLE FISHERMAN

For fish so fresh, dinner can literally be: slice, dip, done.

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If seriously good seafood is your thing, The Little Fisherman is one to know. Their selection of **fresh fish** is the sort that makes you start mentally planning dinner before you've even left. Case in point: this sashimi. When the fish is this good, you hardly need to touch it. Slice it up, add a little wasabi and soy sauce, and let the quality do the talking. Clean, buttery, beautifully firm and ridiculously fresh. Of course, you can take your catch home and get clever with it, but sometimes doing less is exactly the point. Pick up some fresh fish, grab a cold bottle of MCC and Bob's your uncle. Dinner is served.

BEAU CONSTANTIA

A cheese platter that understood the assignment.



I love a **cheese platter**, but I really love one that gives me options, and Beau Constantia absolutely gets it. This is easily one of my favourites in Cape Town because they've nailed that sweet-savoury, little-bit-of-everything situation. Different cheeses, nuts, pretzels, honey and all those delicious little extras that mean every bite can be completely different from the last. It's proper grazing, and exactly how I want a cheese platter to be. Then there's the bottle of **Karin**, beautifully easy-drinking and exactly what I want alongside it, plus those frankly unfair Constantia vineyard views. Good cheese. Easy-drinking wine. Ridiculous view. Fingers crossed, good company. And if you're short on the good company, feel free to swing an invite my way.

Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • Dessert • Drink • Foodie
Find • **Experience** • Dish of the Month • Worth the Trip

THE CONSERVATORY

The springbok I'm still thinking about.



I'm already a sucker for springbok, but this **seared springbok loin** was something else. Beautifully cooked, ridiculously tender and paired with a deep, rich jus that gave the whole plate that proper savoury, meaty depth. But the sweet potato dauphine might have been my favourite surprise. There was something about its sweetness that took me straight to pampoenkoekies: nostalgic and comforting, just in a considerably fancier outfit. Add the young carrots, little hits of dukkah and marmalade, and you get this gorgeous back-and-forth between sweet, savoury, rich and spiced. Then there's the setting. The Conservatory is so beautiful it almost feels like you've temporarily left Cape Town altogether. Overall, a very memorable dinner.

Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • Dessert • Drink • Foodie
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POKE & SHELLFISH CO

Turns out, a poke bowl is a perfectly valid reason for a road trip.



The **teriyaki chicken poke bowl** from Poke & Shellfish Co is exactly what I want from a poke bowl: fresh, filling and absolutely smothered in flavour without feeling heavy. The chicken is beautifully tender with that sweet-savoury teriyaki goodness, while all the fresh, crunchy bits keep things bright. Then you get just enough creamy mayo running through it, with the rice underneath happily soaking up everything that makes its way down there. Basically, the bottom of the bowl is where all the good decisions collect. And considering you get to eat it at Elgin Railway Market, even better. Make a little excursion of it, wander the market, eat something delicious and pretend the poke bowl was the entire reason you drove out there.

Breakfast • Lunch • Dinner • Dessert • Drink • Foodie
Find • Experience • Dish of the Month • **Worth the Trip**

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Find • Experience • Dish of the Month • Worth the Trip



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