



# My Weekend

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# Plett shows off wine excellence



**GOOD FOOD:** From left, the entertainment for the day, quaffing Champu and the delicious eats

**FESTIVE FUN:** Wine maker Anton Smal teaches Plett mayor Memory Booyesen the art of sabrage

Picturesque Garden Route town exhibited best of wine, bubbly and food

Angela Daniels

**A**S a boy growing up in the Transkei, Plettenberg Bay mayor Memory Booyesen would have laughed had anyone told him he would one day be sipping Chardonnay and swilling Sauvignon Blanc while sluking down an oyster or two.

In a similar fashion renowned wine maker Anton Smal – in his early days as a vintner on the Stellenbosch wine route – would have given a wry smile and a shake of his head had he been told that his career would take him to an area many believed would never yield vines good enough to create award winning wines.

Yet, last weekend, the affable pair took centre stage at the inaugural Plettenberg Bay Wine and Bubbly Festival.

Speaking at the festival's opening ceremony, at swish hotel The Plettenberg, the charismatic Booyesen said the switch from *umqombothi* (traditional beer) to wine took a little bit of getting used to.

And just when he got used to the whites people pressed him to try the reds – something he managed with the help of a little bit of coke.

The mix of red wine and coke, known colloquially as katemba, is no longer Booyesen's poison as he "has become middle class now" and enjoys his wine undiluted.

And what wines they are. In an

amazing display of excellence many of the wine farms are winning awards – nothing short of a miracle when one considers that the first vines were only introduced to the area in 2000.

Now, 14 years later, 16 estates can be found in Plettenberg Bay and the wines of origin region pulled off a magnificent show at the Beacon Isle.

Much of the success of the wines can be attributed to Smal who is the vintner for most of the estates and who says he is loving life in the picturesque Garden Route town.

While the Plett Wine and Bubbly Festival could not compete with the recently held Port Elizabeth wine show in terms of foot traffic and the

number of exhibitors, it won hands down in terms of atmosphere and sophistication. Top SA band Watershed provided the entertainment, artisanal food was on offer and waves crashed behind the white canopied lawns of the Beacon Isle.

With nine estates exhibiting and over 30 wines on offer there was plenty to tempt the palate.

And while it's all a matter of personal taste, I would advise people

to try the Sauvignon Blanc from Anderson's, the Chardonnay from Newstead, Bramon's MCC and Packwood's Pinot Noir MCC.

For quirky gifts Rare Earth's funky MCC Champu's a must – it's irreverent, fun and delicious to boot.

**FRESH PRODUCE:** The Thyme and Again farm stall and restaurant is a foodie paradise



## Unspoilt treasure just waiting to be discovered

Angela Daniels

PLETTENBERG Bay is fast becoming known for its many excellent restaurants, and just past the Keurbooms River lies a little treasure known as Thyme and Again.

Here, the ingredients are fresh, the service informal but good and the setting perfect for family outings.

Not just a restaurant, the establishment is also home to a fabulous

farm stall that sells just about every fresh ingredient, sauces, homemade marshmallows and preserves.

On a recent visit my husband and I couldn't decide whether we wanted breakfast or lunch when hunger pangs hit somewhere around 11.30am. I was in a breakfast mood, he wanted lunch so we were pleased to discover the menu, while relatively small, had great options for both.

Sitting in the pretty garden set-

ting, with birds in abundance and the laughter nearby of children playing on the quirky jungle gym castle, we opted to start with cappuccinos while we decided on our meals.

With wonderful flavour, our only complaint was that they were not quite hot enough for our liking.

The breakfast choice at Thyme and Again ranges from muesli to a full English breakfast and I chose a three-egg herb omelette with a side

order of mushrooms and ham.

My husband selected a chicken wrap and chips.

Both were delicious, with the wrap – which I couldn't resist sampling – filled with crispy vegetables and a tangy sauce. The eggs were light and the mushrooms succulent.

On our last trip to Plett we visited a number of restaurants, all of which were excellent, so we were pleased to find that Thyme and Again did not

disappoint – especially after the awful meal we had the evening before at The Beacon Isle.

Undercooked chips, unseasoned fish and calamari and a salad that was all lettuce with a piece of tomato or two thrown in for colour, was simply not up to scratch.

With the meal at Thyme and Again less expensive and far better, our faith in Plett as a foodie paradise was somewhat restored.

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## Plett's Stone Cottage perfect for lazing about like weekend hippies

Angela Daniels

FOR the most part Plettenberg Bay is up-market, funky and very modern – so it's somewhat of a surprise to find a place that is arty and rustic with an atmosphere that exudes serenity.

Stone Cottage, found on Plett's main road, is such a place – the kind where you want to kick off your shoes, breathe, dream of growing dreadlocks, drink green tea and paint the beautiful sea views on offer.

And while Stone Cottage is a little bit hippy, it's far more than that. The main home and the cottages, offered as holiday accommodation, have been passionately restored and the eclectic mix of hippy chic, old colonialism, West Coast and African influences are no mistake.

In fact, every piece appears to have been lovingly chosen with aesthetic pleasure or comfort in mind.

It's little wonder that owner Annie le Roux has tended to the home with much love and care – it's been in her family for over a hundred years, from when her ancestors first hitched up their ox wagons and trekked from Uniondale to Plett for holidays.

And what started as a sort of ox wagon camping experience changed to holiday home bliss when a house was built on the land in 1910.

In 1940 Annie's grandmother, Helen le Roux, inherited the home from her parents, the Veras, and she and hus-



**HIPPY CHIC:** Stone Cottage, while rustic, is luxurious and delightfully quirky

band Lukas set about renovating the home. In the '70s the Le Rouxs were forced to sacrifice half their front garden to make way for a four-way main road running from the city centre to the Beacon Isle. Today Stone Cottage, which is home to a main house where artist Annie lives, and guest cottages as well as back-packing accommodation, rests on the hill overlooking the town's beautiful beaches with views stretching from the Outeniqua mountains to the Robberg peninsula.

Birds sing in the trees, and the only downside is the occasional roar of traffic careening slightly too fast down the hill to the beach.

But this is just a minor annoyance as the views are spectacular and the amenities fabulous – braai areas, couches on the patio and a jacuzzi in the garden provide guests with both the necessities and the frivolity one needs while on holiday.

In keeping with the old-school charm and authenticity, the gardens at Stone Cottage are indigenous, abounding with succulents and have the quintessential lazy dog lying on the porch.

For bookish types spending a little bit longer than a few days, the cottages are full of books and magazines – just one of the many thoughtful touches which abound at Stone Cottage.

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