

Chef George Jardine settles into Mount Nelson as executive chef

By [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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Mount Nelson, a Belmond Hotel, has ushered in esteemed chef George Jardine as its new executive chef. A harbinger of heritage and contemporary cool in the heart of the city, the world-renowned hotel has its sights set on a bold gastronomic future and the Scottish-born chef is an integral part of this journey.



Chef George Jardine. Image supplied

A celebrity in the culinary hall of fame, Jardine leaves behind a wave of success at restaurants Jordan (most recently), Jardine and Seven, coupled with stints at lauded restaurants and hotels across the globe. Of his new culinary home ground he says: "Mount Nelson has always been an icon and – in one way or another – has been part of my life since the day I arrived in South Africa. So, when we discovered our alignment on the position, it felt like destiny."

We catch up with chef George Jardine...

▣ *When did your passion for great food start?*

My passion for good food started at home, but my passion for great food started when I worked with great chef mentors. I have two in particular who took the time to train, encourage and mentor my attitude. Tommy Gordon was my first mentor, a great chef from Scotland. The second was Jean Christophe Novelli, also a great mentor and helped to shape my vision.

▣ *What inspired you to become a chef?*

I grew up in a family of chefs - from my grandmother to my uncles and cousins, I had many relatives in the industry, so my family was my main source of inspiration.

▣ *How did you end up in the restaurant industry? What has the journey been like?*

I was born and raised in Sunny Leith in Edinburgh, Scotland. I started in the restaurant industry straight out of school, at the age of 15. Since then, I've worked at restaurants across the world – London, Jakarta, Sydney and, of course, South Africa. It has been, and remains, a rollercoaster ride.



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▄ ***How would you characterise your food and where do you find inspiration?***

My food is mostly inspired by the journey of finding wonderful produce. Many of my dishes are characterised by locally sourced and seasonal, fresh ingredients. I like to keep the ingredients simple but execute the dish to perfection. I also personally gain a great deal of inspiration from the teams and individuals that I work with.

▄ ***Not only are you an award-winning chef, but you have several restaurants under your name. How do you find the balance of chef and businessman?***

A great chef needs to not only have good taste, but also needs to have the qualities and characteristics of a good businessman. Managing a kitchen brigade takes a very business-minded approach.

▄ ***You've worked around the world. What's the one place you would keep going back to and why?***

Malaysia. Beautiful people, wonderful food and my kids were born there so I have many good memories that will keep me going back for more.

▄ ***Describe the dish you're most well-known for?***

My loyal customers would most likely say the Honey and Poppy Seed Soufflé, or Mussels En Papillote. I could never take those two dishes off the menu.

▄ ***As the new executive chef at Mount Nelson, what can diners expect from you going forward?***

Guests of the Mount Nelson can expect an overall uplifting of our culinary offering and they can expect a few new concept restaurants. It is a long road, but I would like Mount Nelson to be known as a bastion of culinary excellence in Africa - I look forward to this new journey.

▄ ***Being a chef takes a lot of your time and energy. How and what do you do when you have time out?***

Time out is spent with my family and pets at home in Stellenbosch. This ordinarily entails a lot of walks in the mountains and, of course, frequent discussions on what we'll be cooking up for dinner.

▄ ***What advice do you have for young and upcoming chefs wanting to make an impression in the industry?***

My only advice would be to give it your all, choose good mentors who will teach, and pick the best places to work.

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