

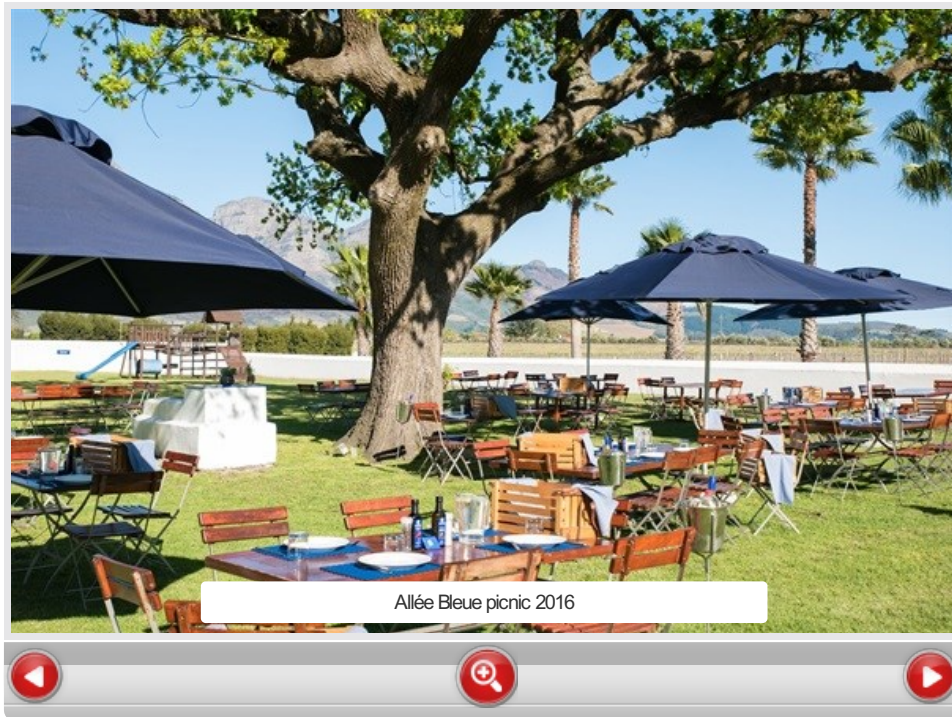
Chic summer picnics, Allée Bleue style

 By Leigh Andrews

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On the road to Franschhoek, at the intersection of the R45 and R310, is the 200-hectare Allée Bleue Estate. Established in 1690, the working farm has been run by the Dauphin family for 17 years, with their summer chicnics the ideal reason to plan a visit and sample their fare.

I'll confess: we're not big picnickers. My husband had images of ants crawling over his legs while sitting on a small scratchy blanket, forcing a smile as he munched soggy egg sandwiches served with lukewarm tea. This was not that picnic. Having confirmed our booking at the gate, parked in the shady lot and followed the signs for 'picnic area', we were met by our friendly hostess for the afternoon and walked to our specially reserved table – yes a full table, not a blanket on the ground. Though that wouldn't have been much of problem as the gardens are perfectly manicured and the view of the Drakenstein mountains in the distance kept calling my eyes to zone out with all the soothing blues on display, emphasising the fact that we were safely enveloped by nature.



That's what makes the Allée Bleue picnic a 'Chicnic': It's a decidedly chic offering, complete with wooden tables and chairs set with charming blue gingham under an impressive sprawling oak tree, with a babbling water feature and soft music gently piping through the area setting the scene. There's no lengthy wait for each course to arrive either, though relaxation's definitely the name of the game here: Once drinks are ordered the cheese and charcuterie platter is set on the table, loaded with creamy local cheeses, cold meats, olives, yoghurt balls and fruited dry Melba toast, along with a freshly baked bread (that we ended up taking home with us as there was so much else to sample) and a delightful selection of spreads in individual glass jars, including a sharp smoked olive tapenade, aniseed-onion marmalade, tart chilli-tomato chutney and green basil pesto. The pre-ordered picnic baskets are veritable crates, so hefty that ours had a chair to itself – these are definitely for sharing. The hostesses are attentive and happy to remove empty containers and top up your drinks as required.

If you're anything like us, those empty containers will stack up fast as it's all delicious produce fresh from the estate's soil, with new hospitality managers Kevin and Berdine Jansen hidden in the picnic gazebo and placing a particular focus on Allée Bleue's signature herbs, with the estate is ranked among the top three herb growers in the province. Little wonder

there's a fresh produce shop on site. Even the olive oil is made from the estate's olive trees, situated on the banks of the Berg River in the Franschhoek Valley. But I digress...

Fawning over farm-fresh Franschhoek produce

The standard picnic menu is a mix of local and international flavours – from a cold braised beef wrap with sour fig salsa and wasabi tzatziki – my husband's favourite for its subtle zing; to my personal favourite – the freshly made mini bobotie pies, especially with a smear of the chilli tomato chutney to bring out their warmth. Curiosity piqued, we learned that the vegetarian basket's wraps are filled with roast zucchini and hummus, and the mini-pies are baked around moussaka. Mmm.

Already feeling satisfied, we slowly made our way through the Allée Bleue micro-herb salad, served in individual glass jars and dressed with a cabernet/merlot wine reduction – yes, you guessed it, made from the estate's award-winning wines, and dusted with nutty pecorino cheese shavings.

While there's an extensive beverage list featuring Allée Bleue's wines as well as assorted spirits that may tickle your fancy in the wide outdoors, like Amarula and Apple sours, the only downside for me was the lack of milkshakes on the menu. Luckily dessert made up for that. Also served in individual Consol glass jars, the white chocolate mousse was a fluffy marshmallow-y consistency with farm-fresh strawberry slices and a pleasing chunk of rich, handmade toffee brittle set with pumpkin seeds for careful crunch.

We spent a pleasant hour or so lapping up our luxurious lunch but could have easily lingered all afternoon. What a blissful way to welcome summer!

**Leigh Andrews was a guest at Allée Bleue. Remember to book your picnic baskets before arriving. The standard and vegetarian menus cost R195 per person sharing. There's also a kiddies' picnic (think homemade pizza, fresh sweet potato chips, carrot sticks, a selection of cheese, nuts and cold meats and a sugar cone with berries and homemade ice cream) at R95 per child and a jungle gym, jumping castle and trampoline to keep them entertained while you relax. Allée Bleue is open each day from 11am to 4pm, including public holidays. For bookings or enquiries, call 021 874 1021 or email info@Alleebleue.com. Follow them on Twitter [@AlleeBleue](https://twitter.com/AlleeBleue), and [Facebook](#) for more.*

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews AKA the #MilkshakeQueen, is former Editor-in-Chief: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com, with a passion for issues of diversity, inclusion and equality, and of course, gourmet food and drinks! She can be reached on Twitter at @Leigh_Andrews.

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