

Pick the Pepper

A gift for hospitality marks out Camps Bay venue



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PEPPER Club On The Beach is the Camps Bay "division" of the Pepper Club hotel and apartments in downtown Cape Town.

Should you be staying at the latter, you can catch a shuttle – in a Rolls Royce, no less – to the former, and the add-ons (just sitting down and eating is out of fashion, it seems) also include private changing facilities so you can pop in, have a cocktail, hop over the road to the beach for a tanning session, and then come back for

lunch or dinner.

There's even a swanky nightclub, St Yves, upstairs, so, provided you're foot-loose and fancy-free – and have some spare change – it's an accommodation/restaurant/entertainment package that should leave you feeling like a (very relaxed) VIP.

But all of that without a personal touch is, frankly, so much window dressing, and the Pepper Club On The Beach restaurant, stylish and trendy though it is, scores highly largely because of one member of its personnel.

Manager Gavin Lockitch is to this manor born.

Cape Town tourist traffic is very seasonal, and when the South-Eastern is blowing, Camps Bay is essentially an attractive wind tunnel.

The reality of managing a large beachfront restaurant, therefore, is that the only predictable thing about the number of expected

guests on any given day is that it is wildly unpredictable.

Lockitch, it seems, could care less. If you are the only customer in the building or one of 150, you're his responsibility and, in certain cases, a challenge he's only to happy to take up.

A fellow diner was vegan and wheat intolerant.

She likely expected, if not a blank stare, at least a nervous twitch when she announced this.

Instead, Lockitch immediately rattled off a long list of fairly



DETAILS

■ Pepper Club On The Beach, The Promenade, Victoria Road, Camps Bay

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standard options – proving, impressively, his understanding of veganism to be as good as his customer's – before suggesting that he get into the kitchen himself and rustle up something unique and off-menu.

Such service is commendable, but it should be the norm in any upmarket establishment.

What set this incident apart was the enthusiasm for his craft that Lockitch showed, an attitude that showed off what people who really excel at hospitality share: a desire to help other people enjoy themselves.

That he does so with vaguely frightening energy levels

and incisive humour is an added bonus.

The food is good, with a range of stock dishes from calamari starters to steak mains and the like. There are also specials such as the Cape Malay lamb curry, which comes served in a little *potjie* pot.

It's a popular dish – so much so that the kitchen occasionally runs out of the pots and has to improvise.

There's also a long list of interesting cocktails, ideal for sipping as you sit and watch the great, the good and the slightly seedy strut their stuff along the promenade.

It's Camps Bay, so "cheap" is not really part of the equation, but should you have the cash or be looking for a spot for a special occasion, Pepper Club On The Beach is a good option.

And ask for Gavin.

