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STYLE ADVICE

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HOME INTO
A HI-TECH
PALACE

GOLFING
GEAR

HOTTEST
HATCHBACK
OF 2006





GQ'S FOOD PAIRING

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ASIAN TAPAS

IT'S HARDLY BEEN OPEN, BUT HAIKU'S TABLES ARE ALREADY IN HIGH DEMAND. TIANA DITNER SPOKE TO OWNER SABI SABHARWAL ABOUT HIS FAVOURITE DISHES AND THE NIGHT CLUB DÉCOR

Why Asian Tapas? I was looking for a new challenge, something to keep me young. I wanted it to be more creative than opening another Bukhara.

Where did your inspiration come from? From all over – for the food China, and the décor mostly Japan. People always want to compare my restaurant to ones like Hakassan and Zuma in London, but this is not a copy, we are quite different, we are more Tapas style. The inspiration also comes from Singapore and Thailand where they have vast open fridges. It is meant to be like a market where everything is fresh. We used to go to all the hotels, to their kitchens and restaurants. We would go to 20 restaurants a day, my credit card was banned in Hong Kong, they thought it was fraudulent – how much could someone eat?

How did you choose the décor? Everything is meant to flow, there is nothing complicated. There were suggestions that I should get some Chinese dragons, but I wanted to keep it simple. I get worried when people say it is 'night clubby'. It is not meant to be like Bukhara upstairs, busy and bustling. It is meant to be all about the food.

Simply bringing the chefs and equipment from China was a considerable risk? All the equipment

comes from Asia, and the chefs from 5-star hotels. We knew we were doing something of quality. We have 40 staff working to serve 70 people. This restaurant is not about the turnover, my aim is to make it like Tetsuya in Singapore and Sydney, a small restaurant that concentrates on the food and the quality should be perfect.

How do you keep a consistently high standard?

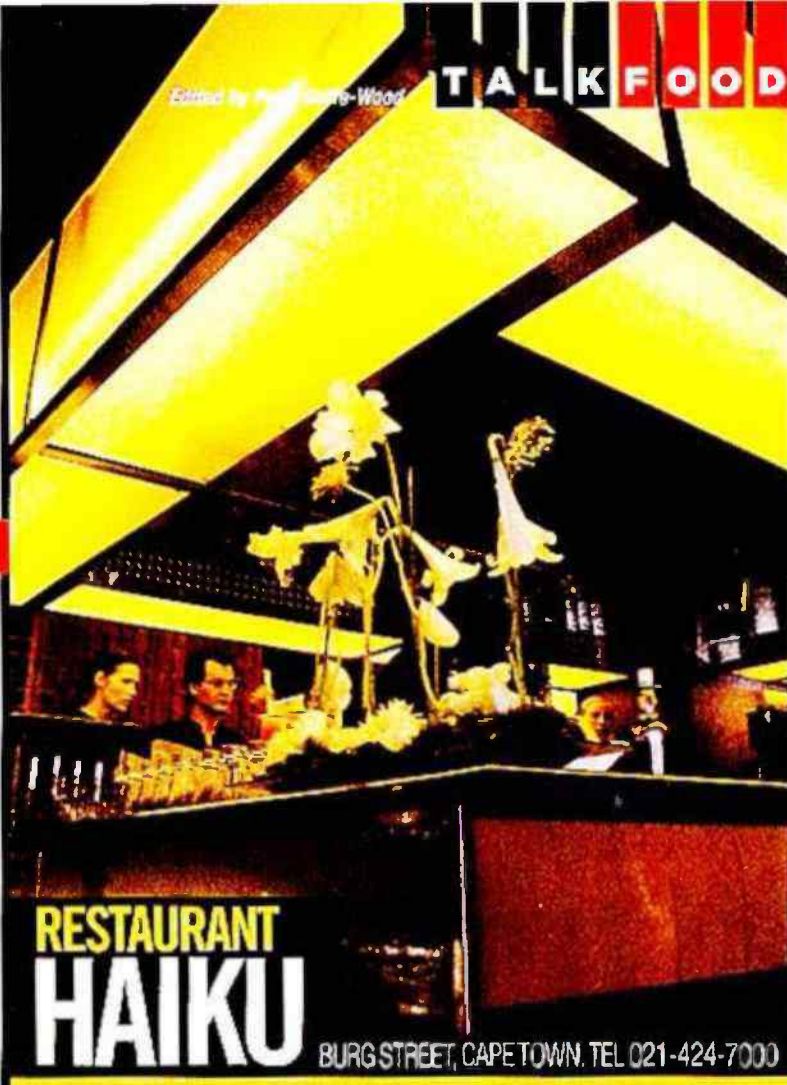
The challenge is to keep integrity in the food, for it to taste genuine without everything tasting sweet and sour. We do not use pork like in China, but rather lots of seafood. The Chinese chefs are very good at flash frying on a very high heat, to seal all the flavours in. My function was to get the taste right to pick up what was missing in a dish.

What is your favourite dish at Haiku? I like everything. The most popular dish is crispy Peking duck. We sell up to 31 ducks a night. **Where do you eat out in Cape Town?** I like many places, but with four children we choose family restaurants. I lived in America for 13 years and went to McDonalds once. Now McDonalds is my most visited restaurant.



From top: The entrance to Haiku, chefs at work, and the mouth-watering results.

Edited by Peter Gorfe-Wood



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THE OLD Press Club in Burg Street is home to Sabi Sabharwal's latest addition to the award-winning Bukhara stable. There is a common thread between the two – in order to do ethnic food justice you need chefs with first-hand knowledge. So he has imported his kitchen brigade from China and all of the specialised cooking equipment is from the Far East. Recent trips to China, Japan and Singapore have inspired Sabi to introduce the concept of Asian Tapas to Cape Town – and by all accounts he has hit the spot. Haiku has only recently opened its doors and you can't get a table on the weekend for love nor money. Dark wood, soft lighting and rough granite surfaces make Haiku a stylish dining experience. You can sit at the counter and watch the chefs weave their magic in the striking open-plan kitchen that is divided into four cooking sections: dim sum, wok, robata grill and sushi.

The menu is served in smaller tapas size portions so diners are encouraged to order a wide selection of delectable treats. We sampled at least 12 dishes between four of us and every single one of them was out of this world. Cheung Fan, a steamed rice barbecue duck roll, was one of our favourites. It may not be ideal first date material, as it is rather tricky to eat with chopsticks, but definitely worth the struggle. The mixed vegetable robata, with ginger sauce, was displayed like a work of art. You have to try the salmon sashimi arranged in the shape of flowers on the Haiku Deluxe Platter and the Three Mushrooms in oyster sauce. We'll definitely be heading back to devour the rest of the mouth-watering items we didn't have space for. □ Tiana Ditner