

It is an experience....a memory that doesn't stretch too far into the past and has actually nothing to do with my mother or grandmother, or my childhood at home. Neither does it stay only a memory, and neither was it created in the kitchen. But it does take me down wander lane and I remember, and it does evoke a smile and I do have whiffs of aromas floating around me.

It is a memory that takes me back home. To where the mountains meet the seas and the vineyards in Stellenbosch, South Africa. Where a part of my heart will always be swirled up in the howl of the South-Easter wind, the gay dancing of the African sun and the misty spray of the winter rains. It takes me back to family. And it takes me back to friends. To Mariaan and her *vetkoek*.



On our visits back home, a regular stop is at Vredenheim where we stay with good friends. We step into an old home, where the smell of wooden floors and the sound of farm life remind us that we've been away. Time falls away after the first coffee with an accompanying *koeksister* and we catch up on how much the kids have changed and grown, their exciting first jobs and the latest boyfriends...We tease about each other's grey hair and giggle about all our new little habits. We dig into the latest gossip and ooh about the recent marriages and sigh about sad losses.

As the sun sets magically over the mountains, the evening comes alive with the clinging of wine glasses and popping of corks, feminine giggles in the kitchen and woody cracklings of the starting barbecue fire. It is time for *braaivleis*, traditional way. Real *wingerdstompies* (vineyard stumps) ; no gas or bought charcoal or bricks or fancy tools. Fresh meat. Fresh simple salads. And *vetkoek*, drizzled with golden syrup, or draped with spoonfuls of homemade apricot jam.

We sit back by the cleared table; dishes cleaned, last coffee of the day. We start telling our stories, filled with history and culture, nostalgia and invention. We exaggerate, we colour, we gesture, we interrupt, we laugh. And finally, when the moon starts nodding and the night becomes very quiet, we move on to our rooms, content with being who we are and where we are.

An old memory has come alive, pulsating with the excitement of new details and it will always be the same and it will always be different and it will always be precious.

