

“APPROACH LOVE AND COOKING WITH RECKLESS ABANDON....”

Capetonians live life to the fullest, as evidenced by entrepreneur **Denise Levy** who speaks about the city's love for food and the outdoors

She lives the Cape Town lifestyle. We meet Denise Levy in her beautiful old home that she calls the 'peppermint palace' due to its faded green colour. Several dogs and cats wander over to check us out as we walk into a stunning modern kitchen. The house has white columns, an outdoor porch, a large outdoor dining table, a large indoor dining table, paintings by local artists, a bathroom laden with family portraits and cookbooks everywhere. A small pool and outdoor furniture make for comfortable seating when the weather is good, which it mostly is.

Born in Argentina, this former international model of the '80s, who has travelled the world, started Cape Town Productions, becoming a pioneer in the stills production business and running the 'biggest and best' production company in Cape Town. Even then, she spent "many years of client-entertaining at home, from 10 to 50 guests, fearlessly and effortlessly". And then, at the age of 58, she changed careers with aplomb and started Ginger & Lime, with the concept of opening her kitchen to others who are also passionate about food and who enjoy the experience of cooking together. "My concept is, come to me, become part of the

family, chop, stir, pour the wine, put on the music and then, let's all eat together...." And so the Levy home sees two interactive cooking experiences a week, as well as private functions, *MasterChef*-style parties, meetings with major companies, board meetings and so on. "I felt that I earned the right to pursue my passion after putting so many years into a career," she says, very rightly!

Denise Levy speaks about....

CAPE TOWN'S MARKETS.... "I love food markets, fish markets and delis with wonderful international products, and even the humble supermarket holds wonder for me, at the possibilities that it has to create

fabulous food. The Old Biscuit Mill is fantastic to visit on a Saturday morning for the Farmers' Market. Saturday mornings also sees the Waterfront Market where you can eat, sample or take home a variety of food. The entrepreneurship here is amazing and everyone loves what they do. Last Wednesday of the month, the Waterfront has a late-night market where furniture and interior products are on display; there's very nice food as well. There is a market in Hout Bay as well, on a Saturday."

BRAAIING.... "South Africans are generally very warm and hospitable people and will invite you into their homes. There is a lot of socialising at people's houses. There is so much



happening around food and wine and beer, these days. And a lot of outdoor eating. The men in South Africa, they all think they can braai but in my classes I am teaching the ladies to gourmet braai!"

LIFESTYLE.... "I love the outdoor aspect of the city. People exercise, walk, trek, swim...we are so lucky to live by the sea. I love the fact that we can stay fit in an outdoor, natural kind of way. We live amongst wonderful nature here. You must do a walk on Lion's Head – the views are amazing."

RESTAURANTS.... "Trending right now is the Bree Street area and Chefs Kitchen; Liam Tomlin is really pretty much the top chef in the city. Kloof Street too has a lot of restaurants and bars, my favourite being Hallelujah which has only 10 items on the menu which are all great. Camps Bay has a good strip of restaurants; Café Caprice is where the youngsters hang out. And yes, there's The Grand Cafe & Beach on the Waterfront towards Sea Point – that's really a feet-in-the-sand kind of place with great food – one of the few places that is right on the beach...."

HISTORY OF CUISINE....

"There's such a mix of cuisines here since Cape Town is so cosmopolitan, everybody has had a little influence somewhere! We tend to think of traditional South African food as the Cape Malay cuisine with recipes that have come down from the 17th century when kitchen workers would add their own spices to dishes. The Dutch and British added their bits too. And the French arrived and started the wine industry. Our wines are fantastic, we are very lucky here...." 

Right: Denise Levy's home kitchen
Facing page: Denise Levy in her kitchen; details of her home and products