

## SOUTH AFRICA

# Culinary Cape Malay

A cooking safari dishes up more than food in Cape Town's colourful Bo-Kaap district.

WORDS BRIAR JENSEN

A FRAGRANT MIX OF SAUTÉED ONIONS, garlic, turmeric and chilli wafts through the small house as I squish slippery minced beef between my fingers. The little kitchen fills with happy banter as we, four guests, try to recreate the classic dishes we've just eaten, under the guidance of head-scarfed Mimoena. I'm making bobotie, the famous Cape Malay dish of spicy beef topped with baked egg.

Mimoena supplements her small wage as a seamstress by hosting visitors in her home for a traditional Cape Malay lunch and cooking lesson; it's part of a walking tour that opens a window into Cape Town's Cape Malay district, known for its rainbow-coloured houses and spice trading companies.

The roots of the Cape's Malay population date back to the 17th century when the Dutch East India Company established Cape Town as a halfway provisioning point on the major trading route between Asia and Europe. Slaves skilled in building, tailoring, gardening and cooking were transported from South East Asia, predominantly Indonesia, Java and Malaysia.

With the emancipation of slaves in 1834, many moved into the Bo-Kaap district, a settlement for disadvantaged communities. Perched on the slopes of Signal Hill with Table Mountain as a backdrop, Bo-Kaap has been listed as a National Monument for its concentration of pre-1840 architecture. Less than 2km in extent, the multicultural area is home to about 12,000 people.



I count 10 different masala mixes – including mother-in-law and father-in-law masala, and get my first whiff of frankincense and myrrh.

Our guide, Shireen, meets us outside the Bo-Kaap Museum, housed in the oldest building in the district. Restored to represent a 19th century Cape Malay dwelling, the museum recounts the social history of the community. Evocative sepia images portray the stories of the building of Cape Town, the slave trade, the growth of Islam and the history of apartheid.

Across the road is the Atlas Trading Company, a third generation spice trading wholesaler. The pungent aroma from the cornucopia of spices wafts into the street.

Huge timber bins are filled with finely ground spices in earthy shades and russet hues. Shelves are stacked with packets of seeds, lentils, beans, leaves, chillies and rice. I count 10 different masala mixes – including mother-in-law and father-in-law masala, and get my first whiff of frankincense and myrrh.

Back on the street it's equally colourful with houses painted in vibrant

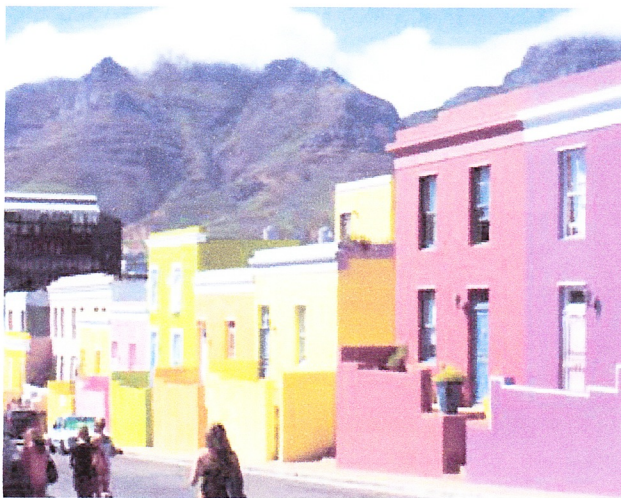


### PLAYING THERE

Cooking safari, visit: [www.bokaap.co.za](http://www.bokaap.co.za) and [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Slaves had one day off a year, when they paraded through the streets. To avoid punishment for singing about oppression they had to disguise themselves. Hence, the flamboyant costumes of today's Cape Town Carnival.



shades of fuchsia, lavender, jade, sunflower and cobalt. About 70 per cent of the population here is Muslim and mosques are dotted between the houses, including the first mosque built in South Africa in 1794.

Arriving at Mimoena's home she welcomes us into her small lounge where she has set a table for lunch. She serves crunchy samosas, dhaltjies (chilli bites), fish curry, vegetable curry, yellow rice and bobotie. Over the shared meal, Mimoena describes life in the Cape Malay community and confides how difficult it is for her children to find work in Cape Town.

Then she invites us into her kitchen. A white lace curtain hangs at the window and the bench is lined with pre-prepared ingredients. While Mimoena browns onions on a portable element, I squidge soaked bread and myriad spices into washed mince for bobotie. Once that's in the oven we attempt to wrap samosas, giggling at our initial incompetence.

I may not remember all the spices for the perfect bobotie, but I cherish the hands-on opportunity to learn about Cape Malay history, culture and food on this inner-city safari.

*The writer was a guest of South African Tourism.*

✓ Contact your Travellers Choice agent

## SOUTH AFRICA SURPRISE



HURRY! Must be paid in full by 30 Nov.

### 15 day Johannesburg to Cape Town Lodge Accommodation.

An unforgettable 15 days in one of the World's most exciting countries! Our tour takes in the best of South Africa — it will surprise you with its variety, fun and adventure.

15 days including flights and taxes

from **\$3,995** <sup>†\*</sup> per person, twin share  
[Single supplement: \$695]

\*Departures: 16 Feb, 9 Mar, 23 Mar, 6 Apr, 20 Apr, 18 May, 15 Jun, 13 Jul, 17 Aug, 2014.

Optional extension to Victoria Falls from **\$995** per person twin share



King of the Savannah



Champagne Castle, Drakensberg



Cape Town at dusk



Addo Elephant Park



"The Heart and Soul of Africa..."  
[www.africasafari.co.au](http://www.africasafari.co.au)

**TRAVELLERS CHOICE**  
A WORLD OF EXPERIENCE

**1300 78 78 58**

†Price includes: Return airfares & taxes (ex Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Coolangabula), transportation in luxury microbus or coach, 3 star accommodation throughout, breakfast daily, 4 dinners, all touring and sightseeing as per itinerary, portersage & VAT. Conditions apply. \*Valid for 2014 departures: 16 Feb, 9 Mar, 23 Mar, 6 Apr, 20 Apr, 18 May, 15 Jun, 13 Jul, 17 Aug. All offers must be booked & paid in full by November 30, 2013. Travellers Choice Ltd T/A Travellers Choice: LIC 97A/1389.