

SAA in-flight meal Johannesburg to Nairobi

In my line of work I've been very fortunate to be able to travel frequently across Africa and Europe in a company-rented [Jettly](#) jet. This has meant many meals from different countries, cultures, hotels, restaurants and airplanes. Each one an experience in its own right. My recent SAA in-flight meal on a trip from Johannesburg to Nairobi (Kenya) was a particularly good experience.

It is fair to say that not all airline meals are created equal. Over the years I've had some very tasty meals and some truly bad experiences.

I don't often get to travel in business class, but I've yet to experience a terrible meal service when I do get bumped up from cattle class (economy). I can fully appreciate why business folk look decidedly more refreshed than their economy counterparts. The meal service, the personal attention (they address you by name on some flights) and naturally the ample space and amenities provided to these passengers are bound to leave you with a more favorable impression.

Interestingly, South African Airways (SAA) recently partnered with Masterchef SA judge and Tsogo Sun Executive Chef, Chef Benny Masekwameng to help inspire some of their dishes.

It is not the first time an airline has partnered with a celebrity chef to reinvent some of their in-flight meals. Molecular gastronomy and Michelin star chef, Heston Blumenthal partnered with British Airways to update and reinvigorate their in-flight cuisine.

On my recent trip to Kenya, I was fortunate to be bumped to business class and got to experience chef Benny's take on reinventing the in-flight meal. Luckily this was not your

regular chicken or vegetable pasta choice but a very nice selection of canapés, appetizers, main course and desert along with a decent wine pairing.

Our canapés consisted of a trio of duck l'orange with asparagus spear, prawn cocktail and mini caprese salad.



This was followed by a choice of appetizers – springbok carpaccio, minted courgette or a seasonal salad.

I opted for the springbok carpaccio with baby spinach, gooseberry chutney and Parmesan shavings. This was accompanied by a small seasonal salad with artichoke hearts. The springbok was extremely tender and delicious. The balsamic reduction paired well with the gooseberry chutney and provided just the right amount of sweetness and tartness to the carpaccio.





Our options for mains included braised lamb, oregano chicken breast, seafood cannelloni and a butternut and spinach panzerotti.

The braised lamb was indicated as chef's choice and there was no reason for me to resist that option.

The braised lamb was served with roast potatoes, mixed chutney vegetables and caramelised onion. To say that it was some of the best lamb curry I had in quite a while would be an understatement. The most tender and flavourful cubes of lamb, combined with the sweetness of the caramelised red onions and peppers, crunchiness of the courgettes and the fluffy potatoes made for a very enjoyable meal. No additional seasoning was necessary. A perfect balance.



I paired my appetizers and main meal with one of SAA's premium selection of wines – in this case a Allée Bleue Isabeau 2013.

Named after the stately avenue of bluegums leading to a 300 year old estate in the Franschoek Valley. This flagship white blend of Chardonnay, Semillon and Voignier creates an exotic melange, barrel-fermented and aged on lees for full, creamy mouthfeel, enticing with citrus and dried apricot aromas, layers of spicy cinnamon, vanilla and summer fruits with lingering lemon flavours.

Basically, a very nice wine to complement the aromatics in the lamb (I definitely picked up notes of apricots and cinnamon in the sauce) and to soften any residual heat from the spices.

For the dessert course I opted for a classic selection of cheese and crackers but paired this with the KWV Classic Cape Tawny port.

This full flavoured wine explodes with fruit, marzipan and toffee on the palate, with a well-balanced sweet finish. Extended wood maturation resulted in a beautiful amber colour with orange zest, dried fruit, caramel and nuttiness on the nose.

Again to say that this stood up well to similar Tawny ports from other regions of the world.



The meal was a great success and I hope to be able to sample more of these. If you fly business from South Africa to Kenya on SAA you will not be disappointed.

On a scale of one to five, I rate this meal five hot towels.