

# TIDEY TASTES



The dining room at Umngazi offers spectacular views over the lagoon and the beach, and ocean beyond.

If you can get past the fabulous food at Umngazi River Bungalows, the views are pretty spectacular too. **Sue Derwent** enjoys it all

It's 7am on a Friday, and I'm at Durban's Virginia airport nibbling warm carrot, apple and cinnamon muffins and sipping delicious hot coffee while I wait for my flight to Umngazi River Bungalows on the Eastern Cape's Wild Coast.

It's fitting to start this story about Umngazi with talk of its food because a holiday at this great family getaway will revolve around the most fabulous, wholesome meals and excellent

wines – the kind of holiday most South Africans absolutely love.

When you wake up in the morning at Umngazi, it will be to the most beautiful wild views of sea, beach, lagoon and natural gardens – and excellent locally blended Transkei Gold coffee and rusks.

With your appetite sharpened, breakfast is guaranteed to delight. It's a buffet with every kind of freshness.

Later you can spend your

morning on the beach, paddling on the lagoon, walking, hiking, sand boarding, visiting the local villages and before you know it, it's lunchtime.

Again, it's a buffet with a delicious soup, patés, salads – you have to try the Caesar Salad bar – veggies and fish or meat for mains and desserts, which usually include ice cream with a choice of chocolate sauce or the famous Umngazi butterscotch sauce.

Then it's time for a nap or lounging around the pool and just as you're wondering if there's time for a stroll, it's afternoon tea time with tea, cappuccinos, home-made cakes or biscuits or some other kind of yummy-ness.

You need a walk after that, or

you could try a spot of lagoon fishing, and then a shower because it's sundowner time with snacks and then dinner – again a buffet of deliciousness.

Umngazi is considered an iconic South African holiday destination with approximately 90 percent of their guests being South African and a large percentage booking a year ahead for their annual family break, usually with other families and friends who are regulars.

As testimony to the great food, service and environment at this beautiful, natural place overlooking a gorgeous lagoon, pristine white beach, natural



**WILD COAST**



Left: The deck offers quiet shady nooks for relaxing. Centre: JJ Pretorius and his staff feed up to 160 people a day. Right: Buffet breakfast.

# Fertile for keeping old family tradition

## SECRET RECIPE

### UMNGAZI DATE & CARROT MUFFINS (HOME-BAKED FOR THE FLY-IN GUESTS) (MAKES ABOUT 18 MUFFINS)

- 250ml flour
- 250ml sugar
- 5ml salt
- 10ml bicarb
- 10ml cinnamon
- 190ml dessicated coconut
- 125ml dates or raisins or cake mix (normally use whatever dried fruits I have – apricots, figs etc)
- Drops of vanilla
- 375ml grated carrot
- 375ml grated apple or pear
- 62ml chopped nuts (optional)
- 3 eggs beaten
- 250ml oil (can use half natural yoghurt and half oil)

- 1 Sift dry ingredients
- 2 Mix all grated fruit, dates, raisins, coconut and nuts together first, and then add to dry ingredients.
- 3 Add add oil (oil/yogurt) and beaten eggs (mix carefully – don't beat)
- 4 Spoon into a greased muffin pan and bake in oven preheated to 180°C for 20-25 minutes
- 5 Optional: top with muesli, a pecan nut or sliced apple before baking. – JJ Pretorius



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grasslands and forests, many guests who visit annually with their children who first came to Umngazi as toddlers themselves and have continued the tradition once they have families of their own. Feeding such a diversity of age groups and tastes is not always easy, but somehow, Umngazi manages to get it just right.

Executive chef JJ Pretorius chuckles when he explains that his instructions from the owners of Umngazi, Pat and Karen Goss, is to provide fresh, healthy, nutritious and delicious food – but nothing pretentious. And that is exactly what you will find on Umngazi's buffet tables. Or in your beach picnic basket. Or for your green-door cellar dinner for 12. Or on your over-the-river-gazebo breakfast. Or for your private, romantic honeymoon surprise meal. Or your sunset cruise.

Even the bar snacks are worth mentioning. Pretorius also makes delicious items for sale in the deli at Umngazi's shop. These range from home-made lemon curd, to Umngazi's famous muesli. The muesli is packaged for guests who can't wait for their next visit.

Fitting with their support of local producers, Umngazi River Bungalows predominantly carries South African wines and has an impressive cellar – although exception is perhaps the Pongrác

bubbly awaiting one on arrival at the Port St Johns airfield.

Pretorius prepares three meals and teatimes for approximately 130 people a day. During high season, that goes up to as many as 160 people a day. But he and his staff of 46 take it in their stride. They have been doing it for years. Perhaps 30 of the meals they prepare are for kiddies who have their own, custom-built dining room, complete with nannies.

He sources most of his meat from Kokstad and East Griqualand, his fish is from KwaZulu-Natal's South Coast and his veggies and fresh produce come from Umtata as well as three nearby local villages.

Local residents supply Umngazi with most of the spinach and herbs such as fennel, mint, parsley and basil. As part of Umngazi's community outreach programme, fruit such as granadillas, pawpaws, lemons and avos are also sourced from local villages.

In true Wild Coast hotel style, Saturday nights are seafood buffets and they are not to be missed.

On Sundays, in true South African style, guests enjoy a fabulous braai on the deck around the pool. A big hit is always the Pondo Stuffed Pumpkin, the recipe for which is really in demand. Other specialities are the crayfish braais and their delicious oxtail.

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