



Jordan Setting

# HEAD, HEART AND HAGGIS

FROM SCOTLAND TO CAPE TOWN



**A** *fval* (offal). To this day that word fills me with dread. As a child, my brother and I would visit my grandmother in the small town of Vryburg in the North West Province of South Africa.

Like two evil conspiring Shakespearean witches, my mother and grandmother would retreat to the kitchen and proceed to cook up this dish most foul. My brother and I would flee in horror as the stench slowly and stealthily made its way out of the kitchen to permeate the rooms one by one until the entire house was saturated in the vileness of this "delicacy" known as *afval*. I blame the Scots, of course. *Afval* is mainly composed of the intestines of sheep in stew format and gives a sideways nod to its Great Great Cousin Haggis.

According to our trusted friend Wikipedia, haggis is popularly assumed to be of Scottish origin, but there is a

The national dish of Scotland has finally reached Cape Town, together with other Scottish cuisine.

lack of historical evidence that could conclusively attribute its origins to any one place or nation.

The first known written recipe for a dish of the name (as "hagese"), made with offal and herbs, is in the verse cookbook *Liber Cure Cocorum* dating from around 1430 in Lancashire, North-West England.

*For hagese'.*

*Be hert of schepe, þe nere þou take,  
Po bowel nocht þou shalle forsake,  
On þe turbilen made, and boyled wele,  
Hacke alle togeder with gode persole,*

The Scottish poem *Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy*, which is dated before 1520 (the generally accepted date prior to the death of William Dunbar, one of the composers), refers to "haggeis":

*Thy fowll front had, and he that  
Bartilmo flaid; The gallowis gaipis eftir  
thy graceles gruntill, As thow wald for  
ane haggeis, hungry gled. – William  
Dunbar, Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy.*

An early printed recipe for haggis appears in 1615 in *The English Huswife* by Gervase Markham. It contains a section entitled "Skill in Oate meale".

I still blame the Scots, though, and to learn about the history of this colourful dish – and all things Scottish cuisine – who better to approach than a real Scottish chef. George Jardine is a Cape Town-based chef and the owner of Jardine – a restaurant with more accolades than Charlize Theron has Oscar nominations.

"I suppose the history of haggis is that it is a poor man's meal," says George.

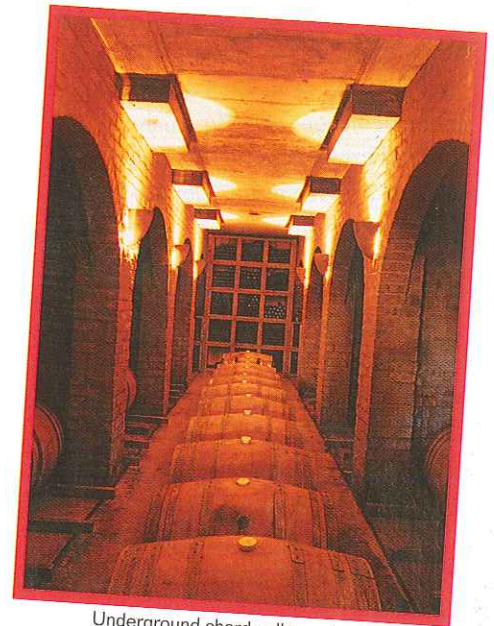
"In the old days the country was owned and controlled by the Lairds, or Lords. They owned everything that grew and lived on the land; basically they would take all the nice bits of meat from the animals and the commoners and workers would have to suffice with the cheap off-cuts and innards. Haggis is

a sheep's stomach stuffed with minced offal, oats and a few spices."

He says haggis can be consumed at all times, but on Burns Night, which is Robert Burns' birthday, it is particularly celebrated. "On this evening there is a ritual to address the haggis, where it is paraded into the room, escorted by a piper and somebody waving two whisky bottles. The 'Ode to the Haggis' is recited to much delight and pomp. It is stabbed at a precise moment in the poem with gusto, then a toast is charged and the beast consumed."

According to George, Scottish cuisine is much the same as that in most parts of Europe – the products are local and seasonal.

"Quite a lot is taken from the sea as the seas in Scotland are very fertile. We smoke and preserve a great deal of our foods, like salmon. Nowadays most of our traditional types of cuisine have been left behind or swallowed up by Europe and it is much the same in any part of Britain. ■■■



Underground chard cellar arches.

"I suppose the history of haggis is that it is a poor man's meal ... workers would have to suffice with the cheap off-cuts and innards."



Haggis

"The most loved dishes in Scotland would be Angus beef, salmon, potatoes, lamb, oats and barley," says he.

I ask him whether or not he sees any Scottish culinary influence in South African food and surprisingly, he says no. "I do not see many, if any, Scottish gourmet influences in SA – maybe smoked trout would be the closest."

And then it's time to get down to brass tacks – whisky.

Which meal is best accompanied by whisky?

"I think whisky is better after a meal as a digestive, not consumed while eating. There may be a few people who would cringe at this statement, especially the whisky promoters, but it is my personal thought on the matter."

And then all of a sudden the conversation turns ugly when I say that it has been suggested that the Irish invented whisky.

"I think it can only be an Irishman who believes that whisky was invented in Ireland or if it was, it must have been a Scottish man in Ireland who invented it.

"Good company makes for a good Scottish whisky. On cold evenings

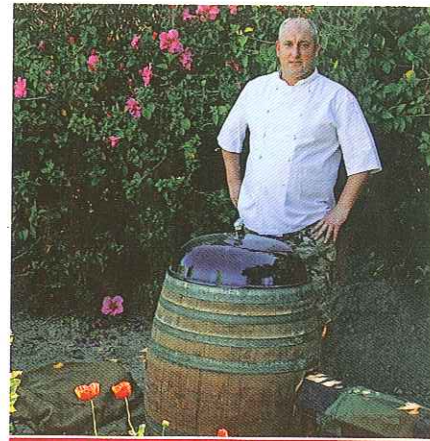
I prefer a smoky Islay malt, after a meal a Speyside malt and a nice blend like Bells or Grouse for quaffing with the boys."

He says he doesn't need to get homesick, given his Western Cape adopted home.

"I personally think the Overberg is very like Scotland, especially in winter when it is most like Scotland in summer, ironically! The south-east coast past Agulhas, around Elgin, is very like Scotland, windy and wet. They grow oats there, and farm with sheep and cattle, you can hunt venison and birds – the only thing you need is a couple of large rivers filled with salmon and it's Scotland. So you can acquire your good Scottish ingredients there – now you just need a Scottish chef!"

When asked what Scottish trait he inherited in terms of his profession, he answers in no uncertain terms: "Not to waste! We use everything, maybe that is why people think the Scots are stingy, but this is common between most good chefs – that's how you make your money."

I am older and somewhat wiser now in my culinary choices but haggis? I still blame the Scots ... 🍷



## GEORGE JARDINE

George Jardine trained all over the UK, mostly in London, and his adventures south of the hemisphere started when a company he was working for in London joined forces with The Cellars Hohenort in Constantia. He was the chef chosen to leave the rain and cold of the UK to come to Cape Town and he has never looked back.

Following the success of Jardine, George and award-winning winemakers Gary and Kathy Jordan have joined forces to open a new restaurant in the grounds of Jordan Wine Estate in Stellenbosch, called The Restaurant at Jordan. George Jardine's menu will focus on local and seasonal ingredients sourced from South Africa's best suppliers and producers – relationships he has built up over many years. The restaurant will also house a selection of the finest seasonal South African cheeses in a walk-in cheese room.



Barrel smoked Stanford trout.

### Contact details

**The Restaurant at Jordan**  
+27 (0)21 881 3612  
+27 (0)83 401 2222  
+27 (0)82 457 6595  
restaurant@jordanwines.com  
**Restaurant Jardine**  
185 Bree Street, Cape Town:  
+27 (0)21 424 5640  
www.jardineonbree.co.za