

FOOD

TINKERER

Artisan chef Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen is the master of his plate



SPOTLIGHT



As the first South African to ever receive the prestigious Michelin accolade, Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen is spreading his love for South African cuisine throughout France and beyond. 'Olfactory memories are inexorably intertwined in each person's understanding of the world,' explains Jan Hendrik, 'and mine were forged in the kitchens of my mother and both my grandmothers.'

Jan Hendrik was raised on his family's farm in Mpumalanga, where he spent a lot of his time in the kitchen and garden. The rest of the time involved tinkering away in the workshop where he transformed old exhausts into vases and objets d'art. Before he knew it, he had a thriving creative cottage industry that would pave his way to culinary Cape Town.

'One culinary arts qualification and a masters in pastry later, I applied for a bachelor's degree in applied design with a major in photography at Stellenbosch University,' he says. 'Spending a lot of time in the surrounding winelands, I discovered a real love for wine and spent a couple of years plying my trade in the wine industry. In the meantime, I continued to foster my love for the visual arts by hosting a few solo painting and photo exhibitions in Cape Town.'

His unique skill set led to a stint as a contributing food editor at *ELLE South Africa*, after which he packed his bags to join the ranks at the test kitchens of the head office of *ELLE International* in Paris. This afforded him the opportunity to co-found COORD Event Direction and launch Champagne PIAFF in Epernay.

'My passion for seemingly insignificant memorabilia as well as the simplicity of personal clutter has led me to pursue my dream of exploring the concept of self in the intangible realm of space and time,' he says. 'Today, I spend my time between Paris, the south of France and Cape Town, where I do freelance photography, food styling and run a small restaurant called JAN. This allows me to indulge my love of the tactile and leave my mark on my surroundings, whether I merely change the position of an object or put my mind to creating something completely new where before there was nothing.'

You can order your signed copy of Jan Hendrik's latest book or learn about the intimate food gatherings he does for enthusiastic foodies in France and Italy at janhendrik.com. **Man**

