

including all-time-favourite capellini with crab, ginger, coriander, chilli and garlic (R68); and main courses that range from simple deep-fried beer-battered hake with tartare sauce and chips (R54) and salmon and tarragon fish cakes (R56) to fish pie with a puffy, golden crust (R58; but I prefer the tarragon-rich chicken pie at R65) and seared tuna with teriyaki and avocado and chilli salsa (R95).

There are a whole lot of rib-sticking meat dishes, too, among them Castle's terrific burgers (R54-R56), beef fillet (R72-R98) with a variety of sauces and fork-tender Sicilian lamb shank (R89).

Castle's food isn't of the fiddled-with, cutting-edge kind; rather it's simple, honest, abundant and, above all, comforting. Her light, crunchy, salty zucchini fritters (R23) — great to share with a first round of drinks — say it all.

At midday on a Sunday, Castle and her two all-important co-chefs, Henry Ndlovu and Elvis Ntshingila, lay out a weigh-to-pay buffet, including selections of seafood pasta, salads such as Parma ham, fig, rocket and gorgonzola, giant pies and a heap of crisp-tender fried calamari. But I prefer the menu because I find samplings of too many dishes compete for space, distinctions blur and beauty goes unnoticed.

Puddings, sinful ones, are chalked on a blackboard — my sweet-toothed son swears by the crème brûlée ice cream with shards of caramel. Service is sweet and attentive.

Let's hope Castle's in for the long haul this time. **Linda Stafford**



Linda Stafford

APARTMENTS TO RENT

New-city comfort

What architect and writer Lindsay Bremmer described as "the city as we wish it (classy, secure and homogeneous)", Melrose Arch, has come of age as a

mixed-use development on the work and entertainment fronts. It's been slower on the living front, though.

However, if you want to see what it's like to stay overnight in this make-believe city — and I don't mean by booking into the Melrose Arch Hotel — then Seasons in Africa can show you. The tourism holding group recently acquired six luxury, top-floor apartments, including an entertainer's dream in the form of a three-bedroom penthouse with private swimming pool. Furnished in rather minimalist style, the one-, two- and three-bedroom pads nevertheless offer the privacy and convenience of a home away from home.

Just watch out for the spiral staircases to lofts where guests can work or children sleep: their height and angle could decapitate you if you were wandering around in the dark, tipsy after a good time at Moyo or the Meat Co.

The smallest apartment is three times the size of a normal five-star hotel room, and equipped to provide the equivalent service. A general manager and butler are on hand 24/7 to arrange anything from a massage to a privately catered dinner party. Dinner reservations, secretarial services, laundry, transfers and sightseeing tours can also be laid on.

#1 MELROSE BLVD

Address: 1 Melrose Boulevard, Melrose Arch, Johannesburg
Tel: 083-555-4793
Go to: www.1melrose.com

The apartments have gas fireplaces, heated towel rails, rain showers, patios with braai facilities, generously stocked fridges, state-of-the-art coffee machines,

large flat-screen TVs equipped with DVD players and cable TV, and ADSL Internet connections.

Melrose Arch may be about aspiring to an old-city lifestyle, but #1 Melrose Blvd is all about the comfort of new cities.

□ Rates are R3 600 (one bedroom), R4 900 (two bedrooms) and R7 200 (three bedrooms)/night, including a light continental breakfast. Two children under 18 can stay free in the one-bedroom and three-bedroom apartments.

Linda Stafford

