



# Mamasan

## Authentic Cape Malay food hits Melville

WORDS: CATHERINE BLACK • IMAGES: SUPPLIED & ISTOCK

**T**he rise of Melville continues. Almost every month it seems there's somewhere new and interesting to eat in the suburb. Sitting somewhere between a formal restaurant and a casual cafe, Mamasan is a cheeky new addition. Run by husband and wife team Dawood and Lauren Peterson, it's a fresh and upbeat homage to authentic Cape Malay food, with a menu inspired by dishes Dawood ate growing up in Cape Town. Similarly, the restaurant's interior, with bright blues, greens and yellows, is inspired by the colourful Georgian houses of the Bo-Kaap. Dawood tells us more.

**Q: What made you open Mamasan?**

**A:** We live nearby and had been thinking of opening a restaurant for a while. I'm also interested in contemporary art, and I wanted to amalgamate these interests into one, so the artwork on the walls is from our personal collection. Although I grew up with Cape Malay food, I rebelled against it because it was what I ate every day. I went off it for a long time, exploring other types of food, but eventually I came back to it.

**Q: How would you define Cape Malay food?**

**A:** It's very specific and is informed by religion; for example, in the type of meat you can use. In comparison to Indian food, Cape Malay dishes are typically sweet and peppery rather than very hot. Also, you don't have the same cornerstone ingredients that you do with Indian food, i.e.

ghee, butter, cream and yoghurt. If there's one thing that defines Cape Malay food, I'd say it's turmeric, which gives the food that brownish/yellow colour and distinctive flavour.

**Q: Tell us about your menu.**

**A:** It's taking its own shape as we settle in, depending on how people respond and what they want. One of the big driving factors for me is to elevate the food, so you won't just find a traditional tomato biryani, for example. And then instead of serving boeber (a sweet drink made with milk, vermicelli, rosewater and almonds), we make ice cream using those ingredients. The flavours are there, but we're using them out of their traditional context. So it's not fusion; it's just doing things slightly differently.

**Q: What are your favourite dishes?**

**A:** Two menu items make me feel nostalgic. There's the veg biryani and seared tuna – my mom used to make this, only back then it was with canned tuna. Then there's the tripe curry with beans. My father's second wife used to make it twice a year for the two Eids – the one after Ramadan and the one where people complete their pilgrimage to Mecca.

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