

# Keeping *life* simple

Architectural designers Evi and Jochim Elsner prepare uncomplicated meals so that they can spend time with their friends out on their deck instead of in the kitchen



Standing on the wooden deck at Evi and Jochim Elsner's Somerset West home, you can look out across a vista that sweeps from the Helderberg Mountains on the right, to Table Mountain in the distance and the shimmering blue water of False Bay on the left. A rustic table is laid to take maximum advantage of the view and a relaxed Evi and Jochim happily await their friends' arrival. Everything is calm and the delicious smell of roast chicken wafts through the house as the sun dips toward the horizon.

The couple's approach to entertaining is to have fun when planning a meal; they visit a number of different farmers' markets in search of the perfect vegetables, breads and olive oils. "Buying good quality ingredients is important to us," says Jochim. "We only use fresh, free-range chickens and eggs."

Their menu is always simple and easy to prepare – they prefer to be out on the

deck with their friends rather than doing last-minute things in the kitchen.

It's not surprising that planning comes easily to them as they are both project managers and designers, who manage building projects for overseas clients.

"We help with choosing the right property and suggest that instead of buying a half-right house, we can make an ugly one perfect," says Evi. So far they have revamped 35 houses for other people and three for themselves. Their current home, unrecognizable from the house they originally bought, was gutted and rebuilt to make the most of the light and views.

Both Evi and Jochim are concerned about the environment and try to use natural materials and recycle at home and on their projects wherever possible. "I really enjoy trying to give old things a new purpose," says Evi. The rustic dining table on their terrace is the perfect example; dressed with French linen and glassware, it's made from wood she salvaged from their house during renovations. "I own a few things I am really

attached to like the old bench I bought in France and the plates I found in Italy."

Evi, who once hand-sanded every board of an entire floor in order to get the perfect aged rounded edges that she wanted, is not afraid of hard work. On top of her architectural design work, she recently opened a tiny showroom, Home Concept Interiors, where she sells the couple's original light fixtures, which they design and assemble in their workshop. "It's not South African style," she smiles, "it's our own style."

Originally from Germany, Evi and Jochim travelled extensively before arriving in South Africa eight years ago. "As a child I thought I would live in South Africa," she says, "I don't know why. When I was older I spent time in Italy and Australia, but when I came here it was like coming home. I went back to Germany and told my then fiancé, Jochim, that we had to live here."

Since moving to the Cape, they've been back to Germany just once. "We love it here and never want to leave," says Evi >

TEXT: GILL CULLINAN PHOTOGRAPHS: HENRIQUE WILDING



*Menu*

**MARTINI**

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**PINZIMONIO**

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**POLLO VELOCE**

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**ROAST POTATOES**

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**GELATO CREMISSIMO**





Jochim and Evi Elsner.

### **MARTINI**

(Serves 1)

*Martini Rosso*  
*juice of half a lemon*  
*ice cubes*

Mix to your taste and serve in a martini glass with a slice of lemon.

### **PINZIMONIO**

This is lovely to start with on a hot day.

*100–150g of raw vegetables per person*  
*(whatever you prefer: peppers, cucumber,*

*celery, carrots)*  
*olive oil*  
*balsamic vinegar*  
*salt and pepper, to taste*

1. Prepare the vegetables by cutting them into long thin strips. If you use celery, leave a few decorative leaves on the ends.
2. Set cruet of oil and vinegar or your favourite premade dressings on the table along with salt and pepper cellars.
3. Give each guest a tall glass in which to mix oil and vinegar, or pour a dressing, and then dip the veg in. Italians enjoy veggies with just olive oil and salt. ▷



### **POLLO VELOCE**

(Serves 6)

*6–10 pieces free-range chicken (we prefer chicken breast on the bone)*

*salt and pepper, to taste*

*2t paprika*

*2t cayenne pepper*

*6 cloves garlic, peeled and finely sliced*

*6T extra virgin olive oil*

*500g cocktail tomatoes*

*400ml Noilly Prat or Martini Bianco*

*300ml cream*

*fresh thyme*

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C.
2. Season the chicken with the salt, pepper, paprika and cayenne pepper.
3. Heat the oil in an ovenproof pan and brown the chicken with the garlic until golden brown.
4. Cut about half the tomatoes in half lengthwise and leave the rest whole, then add to the pan with the Noilly Prat. Place the pan in the oven and roast for about 20–30 minutes.
5. Add the cream and fresh thyme and simmer over a low heat until hot and creamy. Season to taste.
6. Garnish with whole sprigs of fresh thyme and serve with roast potatoes and fresh bread.

### **ROAST POTATOES**

(Serves 6)

*10 potatoes*

*olive oil*

*salt*

1. Preheat the oven to 160°C.
2. Cut the potatoes lengthwise into quarters and put them into an ovenproof dish. Drizzle with olive oil and season with salt. Roast in the oven for about 40 minutes.
3. When the chicken is ready, grill the potatoes for about 5 minutes until they are golden brown. ▷



## GELATO CREMISSIMO

(Serves 6)

*5 free-range egg yolks*

*5T sugar*

*500ml cream*

*1 vanilla pod*

*fresh strawberries*

1. Beat the egg yolks with the sugar until light and thick, adding only a little bit


of sugar at a time. Mix until the sugar is completely absorbed and the mixture is almost white.

2. Heat the cream together with the vanilla pod over a low heat. Don't allow it to boil. Then remove the vanilla pod, cut it open and scrape all the seeds into the cream.

3. Add the hot cream slowly to the egg and sugar mixture, stirring constantly. Return it to the pot and on a gentle heat,

warm until hot and thick, but again don't let it boil.

4. Leave the mixture to cool down before freezing it in an ice cream maker. If you don't have one, you can also put it straight into the freezer; because of the egg yolks you won't get ice crystals.

5. Serve with fresh strawberries. 

### SOURCE

Home Concept Interiors 084 666 8881