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The start of something wonderful

Something Good, takes us back in time.

Growing up, summertime in Port Elizabeth consisted of one all-important thing: The Beach. It had something for everyone. Little kids had their sandcastles; teenagers had the surf and the social scene. Parents had an awesome place to take their kids that didn't cost an arm and a leg, and Grannies and Grandpas got to laze in the sun.

And the roadhouse was what tied it all together.

The roadhouse is quintessentially American, like the drive-inn. And it became an institution I grew up with. My Sundays as a child were filled with trips to the roadhouse, filled with delicious treats (eaten in the car, of course). Cups of fluffy pink

and white soft serves and huge hamburgers with frisbee-thick slices of raw onion being firm favourites. Today, the smell of slap chips inside a car is still enough to instantly transport me back to a time when life seemed more wholesome, simpler and less complicated.

But sadly, like the drive-inn, roadhouses slowly started closing up one by one, until there were none left in PE. That was until a few months ago when Something Good re-opened its doors.

Something Good has a long and colourful history. It first opened in 1955, and depending on what age you are you either remember it as

a place where the family got their Friday night fast food fix; a Ducktail biker hangout where fists flew as regularly as the incoming tide; maybe as a little Nipper eating lemon meringue pie with a light dusting of sea sand courtesy of the ever present offshore wind; or as a place where you experienced your first kiss in the back of a Ford Cortina.

When the site became available for development, long time Summerstrand resident John Davies and his business partners took notice as it was at the time an extremely underused, but beautiful part of the beachfront. Conventional wisdom suggested that opening a bar right on the beach was a strategic move that would reap easy financial rewards in no time at all. But it soon became apparent that they were the inadvertent

Food & Lifestyle

custodians of something much more important.

"You must understand, that this incarnation of Something Good is not just a simple re-opening of the doors. We took the time to really do our homework on this one," he explained. "Something Good has a plethora of deeply personal connotations associated with it. It meant many things to so many people. So we've done our research, and taken great pains to re-capture that special something that made this roadhouse such an iconic and much loved landmark."

It all started when his son, Grant, initially saw the tender in the paper. "We were always keen to revive and add on to what was here before," said Grant. "I mean, the site speaks for itself, without a doubt. We definitely feel that we've maximised the potential of this site."

Soon John, Grant and the rest of the team found themselves sitting on top of something wholly unexpected. "We sat with some of the past owners of Something Good, and the stories they had to tell!" exclaimed John. "It soon became

apparent that this building was a part of so many people's lives at one time or another. The brand itself has such a rich history. We've had the privilege of dozens of people coming in and sharing their personal histories with Something Good, with us."

John tells us of an encounter with an elderly customer who shared her story with him. "She said, 'I remember coming here with my boyfriend'. So I said 'Well, bring him back with you next time. 'I can't!' she said cheekily. 'He's long since passed away!'"

"We've kept the old favourites, but we've also put our own signature on the place by bringing in some truly fantastic gourmet items to the menu."

So the question I get most often when I evangelize Something Good to my friends and relatives is: 'So what's it like?'

I paid a visit to Something Good a few months ago when they first opened. The first such visit in almost two decades. On my way down, I found myself in a state of deep contemplation (well,

deep for me anyway). I suppose I'm at that stage of my life where I've lived enough life to start reflecting on the past. The questions that weighed on my mind was: Was the food good when I was a kid because I had a much narrower frame of reference? Or was it good because it really was good?

So I ordered a Cheeseburger with Chips and a Coke. While the newly revamped sit-down facilities are spotless and extremely aesthetically pleasing, my inner 6 year old demanded that I eat it in the car. And let me tell you, it was altogether familiar yet slightly different in a very good way. It like running into an old family friend you haven't seen in years and finding out that they're doing really, really well for themselves. I'm sure your brain will fill in the blanks. Sometimes you just can't capture a memory within the boundaries of the letters that make up the alphabet, in the same way that you can in a single bite.

On a personal note, I believe that the 'cheeseburger, chips and Coke' combo is the roadhouse equivalent of a French restaurant's Brown Onion Soup. You can tell what the rest of the menu is going to be like by tasting this singular item that serves a showcase of the sum total of the Chef's skill in the kitchen. Don't be fooled. It takes real skill to make a good Cheeseburger and Chips. The majority of the fast food of my youth was made by Greeks. I firmly believe that it tasted as good as it did because it came out of a culture that equated food, with love and family.

John smiles as he looks out over the busy deck, and the bustling parking lot. "We all saw something fantastic the other day. There was a group of little kids sitting outside with their surfboards piled up next to them. They were sitting eating chips and ice cream. It struck us then that our efforts are becoming interwoven into the memories of a whole new generation of kids. That's something really special.




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Food & Wine



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This twelfth issue marks our first year as a publication!

For us, it's been a crash course in getting to know this wonderful City.

We know it's the Friendliest place on Earth, but the ease and warmth with which we have been invited into homes and workplaces has left us truly humbled and touched.

Port Elizabeth is unpretentious; warm and comforting. It's a place of contradiction and strength.

From well established businesses that stretch back to the City's founding, to the newest kids on the block, each of the businesses we have featured over the last year all strive for one thing: to be the best at what they do, and to do it honestly and with excellence.

This issue is dedicated to the truly inspirational businesspeople we've had the privilege to meet over these last 12 issues.

To all those who read this, may 2014 bring you only sweetness and light.

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To thy own self be true

Grind goes back to doing what it does best.

Port Elizabethans can be a quirky bunch at times. I once had a blue faced argument with a man outside an establishment that had shut its doors. He was utterly convinced that they had gone under, despite the fact that there were huge signs behind him boldly proclaiming the business' new address. And it's true of most people I meet. If the doors are closed, the general assumption in PE is: 'shame, they must have gone under'.

So just for the record I'd like to inform you that the Deli Street Cafe in Lutman Street, Richmond Hill never truly disappeared. It relocated to nearby Stanley Street and then later into its current location, as Grind. The new Grind has just recently had a facelift and has re-located a few doors down the street (almost right next to the Granary). For Grind owners Sandra and Tristan Tait, it was always about presenting their customers with an experience that would entertain, as much as it would educate.

"We've changed a lot since Lutman Street," said Sandra, "but one thing that hasn't changed, though, is our drive to present our clients with something spectacular. From the beginning we felt that everything should be on show. It's fascinating to see your order come together and take shape before your very eyes!"

This shift to a smaller venue was a long time in the making, according to Sandra. "We felt that we had

lost a bit of what we were about during the move to Stanley Street. The premises were huge and we were able to do a lot, but we somehow lacked a part of the character that we built up during our time in Lutman Street. So we definitely feel that our moving here is a move back to our core fundamentals."

The new Grind is focused on health and well-being. They now stock a wide range of good quality Asian teas from Nigiro in Claremont, Cape Town. They are also one of the first establishments in Port Elizabeth to offer pots of siphon-made coffee. "Trying freshly made coffee brewed in a siphon should be on your bucket list," said Sandra.

A coffee siphon looks like an hourglass shaped piece of laboratory equipment and would not look out of place on the set of a movie set in Victorian times. Probably because it was first invented in the 1830's.

Basically it is loaded with coffee in a special chamber that separates the two halves of the 'hourglass'. The bottom half is filled with water and is heated from beneath with a butane burner (a bit like the bunsen burners you used to use at school). Temperature and air pressure cause the water to suddenly rush up into the top chamber and stay there. The burner is switched off, and the freshly brewed coffee slowly runs

back into the bottom half as it cools.

The display of whooshing liquids and coffee aromas are both intensely thrilling and entertaining at the same time. The coffee resulting from this delightfully unusual brewing method is very fresh and light. It's also much sweeter and delicate in flavour. Don't let the perceived lightness of the flavour fool you into thinking that it's by any means a weak brew. It contains more caffeine than what is normally found in other more conventional brewing methods. Perfect for night owls!

Grind also stocks beautiful clear glass tea pots. Tea in the Western world tends to be relegated to a teabag stuffed into the dark depths of an elderly ceramic teapot. In the East, tea forms part of the table decor.

Glass teapots allow you to witness the full beauty of high quality, loose leaf teas. When steeped, the leaves slowly unfurl in the hot water like flags in slow motion. Flower based teas, like 'Earl Grey with Blue Flowers', will 'bloom' in your teapot before your very eyes. Teas also offer a whole host of health benefits. Grind also carries a range of beautiful traditional Eastern cast iron tea ware.

The Tait's philosophy has been to focus on the essential, and eliminate the unnecessary. This well thought out reduction in their operation can be likened to a fine consommé. The longer it's left to develop; simmer and reduce, the more vibrant and intense the final result.

Tristan and Sandra invite you to join them at the newly re-opened Grind in Stanley Street, this festive season.