

SANCTUARY MANDELA, EX-PRESIDENT'S HOME TURNED INTO BOUTIQUE HOTEL



This aerial view shows the Sanctuary Mandela hotel in Johannesburg. —AFP photos



Former South African President Nelson Mandela's personal chef and now chef at the Sanctuary Mandela restaurant, Xoliswa Ndoyiya (center), prepares meals in the restaurant's kitchen.



Former South African President Nelson Mandela's personal chef and now chef at the Sanctuary Mandela restaurant, Xoliswa Ndoyiya, prepares a dish in the kitchen.



A client sits at the bar in the Sanctuary Mandela hotel in Johannesburg.

Anti-apartheid legend Nelson Mandela liked hearty, simple meals, like oxtail stew. It was a favourite dish of South Africa's first black president and now fills ravioli served in his former home, which has been transformed into a boutique hotel. The inside of the building, hidden on a quiet street in a wealthy suburb of Johannesburg, had been defaced by squatters. But after a floor-to-ceiling remodel, now sun-light floods in from generous skylights and bay windows. The white facade is all that remains of the original building. Mandela lived there for eight years before moving to another home around the corner with his third wife Graca Machel.

He arrived shortly after his release from prison in 1990, and promptly set about meeting the neighbors, general manager Dimitri Maritz said. "He went knocking on every door, to introduce himself and invite neighbors for canapes and cocktails," Maritz said. "A Chinese man shoofed him away. When he realized he had shut the door in Mandela's face, it is said that he moved not long after that," Maritz laughed, while noting the tale's whiff of urban legend. The hotel, named Sanctuary Mandela, opened in September for guests seeking to bask in the ex-president's calm and positive energy. The presidential suite was once actually the president's bedroom, though the heads of guests do not rest where his did. After the remodel, the bathroom is now where his bed once stood. The window frames bear his nickname "Madiba" and his Robben Island prison number "466/64"—scratched into the wood by his grandson.

'Not a fussy person'

After Mandela's release at age 71, he yearned for the simple pleasures he had been denied during 27 years in prison: playtime with his grandchildren, the scent of a rose, a sip of his favorite sweet Constantia wine. "He was not a fussy person," said chef Xoliswa Ndoyiya, who served Mandela's meals for two decades. She now heads the kitchen of the hotel's restaurant, where every dish is inspired by his tastes. "He did not want to see an oily plate, he didn't have a sweet tongue. Fruit he would eat all the time, throughout the day," she recalled. "He was more a father than a boss. He made you feel comfortable, like you were part of his family."

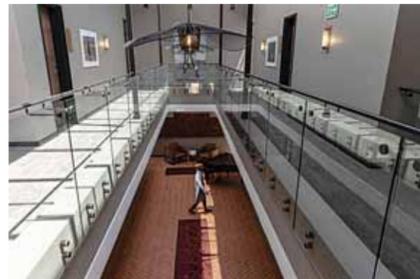
Like Mandela, she's ethnic Xhosa, giving her a shared food sensibility. If she tried to impress Mandela's high-profile guests with food that he didn't fancy, "he would say 'Why are you not feeding me well?' I would feel



A general view of the presidential suite, and one-time bedroom of former South African President Nelson Mandela.



This picture shows the number of the presidential suite, and one-time bedroom of former South African President Nelson Mandela.



A staff member working at the Sanctuary Mandela hotel walks across the hall.



Former South African President Nelson Mandela's personal chef and now chef at the Sanctuary Mandela.

guilty for trying to please the guests instead of my boss," she said. He liked to eat his chicken with his fingers, cleaning the meat to the bone. "With him, you must be humble. He taught us that people will know for who you are. I miss him, very, very much."

'Not a museum'

For as much as the building has been remodeled, the management wants it to feel like a home. Images of Mandela on the walls show him playing peek-a-boo with a baby, dressed to the nines as a young lawyer, and standing with outstretched arms to read a newspaper. Rooms bear the nicknames, Madiba and Tata, that South

Africans fondly used for him. "It is not supposed to be a museum," Maritz said. "We wish to maintain a legacy, but it needs to be self-sustaining, it needs to stay alive." The goal of financial sustainability is a key difference from other sites that memorialize the struggle against apartheid. Here, the assumption is that people are coming for the peace and tranquility that the home offers. Which doesn't mean that they won't talk about Mandela. "We have so many stories," Maritz said. "But we only tell these stories if we are asked." "At first you come for Madiba, the second time for the place itself," he added, hoping that the new venture will embody Mandela's qualities: "Humility and elegance." —AFP

Matt Damon is working on a book about access to clean water

The Last Duel actor has collaborated with civil and environmental engineer Gary White on 'The Worth of Water', which will also feature blurbs from former



US President Bill Clinton and Nobel Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, and the tome will be released on 1 March. The authors - who met at a Clinton Global Initiative event in 2008 - said in a statement: "We're excited to have

written this book together, and we can't wait to share the story of what happens when a movie actor and a civil engineer team up to try and take on the global water crisis - the stumbles and obstacles, the breakthroughs and big gains, and the incredible people we met along the way."

Matt and Gary agreed that their "journey" writing the book had "proved" two things: the ability to fix the issue and how to do it. They continued: "Our journey has proved two things: one, solving the water crisis is possible - within our lifetimes. And two, the key is unleashing the incredible determination and resourcefulness of the people who are fighting every day for essentials like safe water and sanitation." Portofolio, the book's publisher and an imprint of Penguin Random House said of the book: "[It will showcase] the challenges of building and scaling market-based financial solutions to make clean water and sanitation more accessible.

"And ultimately, it's the story of how communities and individuals can be empowered to make long-lasting investments in their own well-being." The 51-year-old actor has been a spokesperson for water sanitation since a 2006 visit to Zambia, while Gary is the founder of charities WaterEquity and Water.org. —Bang Showbiz

Dame Helen Mirren would be a Slytherin in 'Harry Potter'

Dame Helen Mirren would be in the Slytherin House at Hogwarts. The 76-year-old actress - who is set to host the upcoming series 'Harry Potter: Hogwarts Tournament of Houses' - believes she would have to choose the green-themed house in the magical school. She said: "If I had to choose, I'd probably choose Slytherin, because there's a punkishness about Slytherin that appeals to me. You know, the bad boys on the motorbikes kind of thing." In the best-selling book series by J.K. Rowling - and its spin-off film franchise starring Daniel Radcliffe - the Slytherin house is full of darker wizards including the Malfoy family, Bellatrix Lestrange and the infamous Lord Voldemort. Helen's admissions come as she is fronting the four-part competition for Cartoon Network which will



see players compete in teams of three for their respective Hogwarts Houses - whether that be Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw or Slytherin.

Each house will then battle it out to answer questions on the beloved series in a

bid to win a trip to the 'Wizarding World' theme park locations in New York and Orlando. While the Oscar-winning actress Helen admitted that the show was a lot of "hard work", she was also amazed at the Potter passion still held by many. She told PEOPLE: "Gosh, it's hard work. "It's really hard work! What these people do, it's not a picnic. But I have to say, I had such fun. I loved it. It was exhausting. At the end of each day, I just fell into bed completely exhausted. But it was enormous fun. "I had no realization of how profound and widespread the absolute engagement with these stories is all across the world, all across races, across genders, across ages. People really, really have engaged with these stories and I find that, in and of itself, a very beautiful story" —Bang Showbiz

Indian wedding music blamed for death of 63 chickens

A traditional Indian wedding procession with pumping music, fireworks, dancing and a marching brass band in shiny jackets has been blamed for the death of 63 chickens. Ranjit Kumar Parida said the party was blasting out "ear-splitting noise" as it passed his poultry farm in the eastern state of Odisha shortly before midnight on Sunday. "I asked the band operators to lower the volume as the music was too noisy and terrifying the chickens. But they did not listen and the groom's friends shouted at me," Parida told AFP. A vet told Parida the chickens had died

of a heart attack, and he filed a police complaint after the wedding organizers refused to pay compensation. Zoology professor Suryakanta Mishra, who has authored a book on animal behaviour, told the Hindustan Times that loud noise increases the risk of cardiovascular disease in birds. "Chickens are governed by a circadian rhythm that is controlled by the natural light/dark cycle of day and night. "Sudden excitement or stress due to loud music could disrupt their biological clock," Mishra said. The story had a happy ending - except for the chickens - after police con-



vinced the warring parties to "solve the matter mutually". "We have not initiated any action as (the poultry farmer) withdrew the complaint," police official Droupadi Das said. —AFP