

ELLE **hotlist**

TWO'S COMPANY

OYSTER BARS are popping up in every city. And where there are oysters, there is **USUALLY CHAMPAGNE**

By Jenna McArthur

IN food and drink there are styles and flavours that, when put together, perfectly complement each other. There are the combinations that seem unsuited, yet somehow work excellently, and then there are the classic pairings that go together so well you can't ever imagine one without the other. Such is the fate of oysters and Champagne.

Champagne – or sparkling wine if you can't afford the real thing – is the traditional companion to oysters. Although they're sometimes served cooked (and often cooked in champers), oysters are best slurped raw, with a glass of bubbly on the side. It's all about the ceremony and the experience.

Oysters get their romantic reputation from the Greek myth of Aphrodite, goddess of love, who emerged from the sea on an oyster shell and gave birth to Eros, primordial god of sexual love and beauty. The idea that oysters are an aphrodisiac is also supported by the legend that the 18th-century artist of seduction, Casanova, started each meal with dozens of oysters.

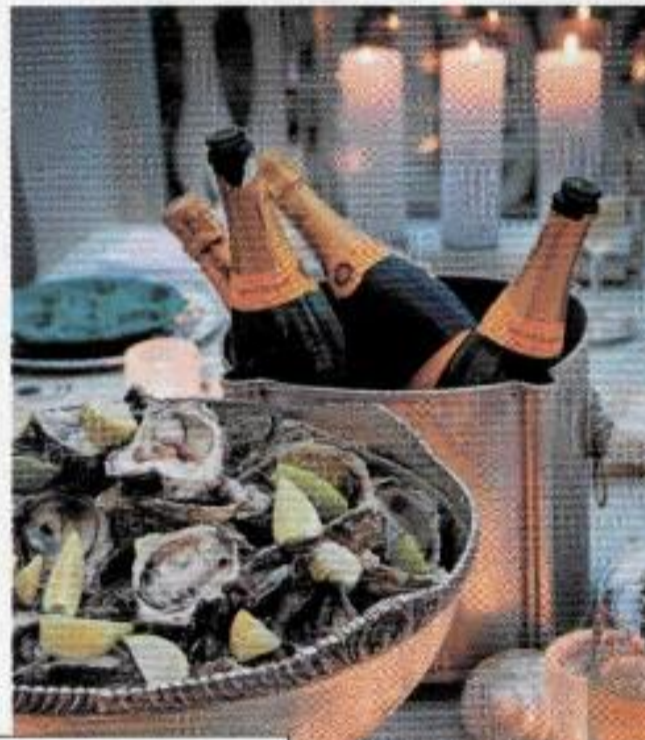
The Romans too loved oysters and paid for them by their weight in gold – but if there were oyster bars in ancient Rome, they most likely did not serve Champagne.

Now, in a fitting revival of glamour and charm, oyster bars are popping up in every city, led by the rebirth of that elegant lady (since 1947) – Durban's Oyster Box Hotel.

It's a world of chandeliers and opulence that makes for nostalgic 1950s glamour. The historic lighthouse, breathtaking views and colonial architecture set the scene for relaxation in style; and the art collection, clock library and sunken wine cellar with its glass ceiling all help to create a timeless, sophisticated setting.

Take a seat at the solid marble bar and order freshly plucked oysters – from the hotel's own oyster beds – with a glass of chilled bubbly of course.

*The Oyster Box, 2 Lighthouse Rd, Umhlanga Rocks
031 514 5000; oysterboxhotel.com*



OYSTER SHOOTER ANYONE?

Put an oyster in a shot glass; add a dash of cocktail sauce, fresh horseradish and Jalapeno vodka. Simple and refreshing.



HOT SPOTS

The Grand Café and Beach
Situating on a private beach overlooking Table Bay, Parisian café chairs and white beach umbrellas set the scene for a chic, laid-back experience while you sink your feet in the sand. Haul Road, off Beach Road, Granger Bay, 021 425 0551; thegrand.co.za

Paparazzi
The official bar of The Pepper Club Hotel. Sip on champers and sample fresh oysters while listening to jazz, on Fridays from 4 to 7pm. Cnr Loop and Pepper Street, Cape Town, 021 812 8888; reservations@pepperclub.co.za

Czar
An opulent setting to enjoy their Champagne and oyster Fridays, from 4pm. Brazilectra, French café and lounge music set the scene. 178 Florida Road, Morningside, Durban, 031 312 8001

The Birdcage
R100 for fresh oysters and Champagne every Wed, Thurs and Friday during the day. 82 Jan Smuts Ave, Cnr Cotswold Drive, Saxonwold, 011 646 6315

Ami Restaurant and Champagne Bar
Offering one of the most comprehensive wine and Champagne lists in Jo'burg with sparkling wine and both pricey and well priced Champagnes. Cnr Lancaster and Clarence Ave, Craighall Park, 011 447 4648