

## TASTE THE RAINBOW

There is nothing like food to illustrate a culture, so sit down in South Africa and enjoy its delicious mix. South Africa's diverse menus can include Cape Malay cuisine in Cape Town, a blend of east Asian flavors brought to South Africa by Dutch settlers and Asian and European seafood just about anywhere along the coast. Try the crayfish, and Indian spiced samosas and curry in hot, tropical Durban or order some bunny chow – a curry stuffed loaf of bread for a quick, delicious lunch.

Most of these traditional dishes can be washed down with lots of beer and the wonderful South African wines at the BRAAI – that ubiquitous South African barbeque. It might be helpful to understand South African dining etiquette

when at a more traditional South African meal:

Many foods may be eaten without cutlery – be sure to use your right hand.

If eating from a communal dish, eat only from the side that is immediately in front of you.

Wash your hands before and after the meal.

A beverage might be served only after the meal is finished.

When seated on a mat or a low stool at a traditional meal, it is important that your toes or feet do not point at the food or others at the meal.

For more information call 1-800-782-9772 or visit [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)

## THE CUISINE OF SOUTH AFRICA:

**BILTONG:** Air-dried (not smoked) strips of spiced meat

**BABOTIE:** A Cape Malay classic made of spicy ground meat

**BOEREWORS:** Home-style sausage

**BREDIE (or Potjekos) when cooked in a three-legged pot):**

A slow-cooked stew of vegetables and meats

**KINGKLIP:** A unique South African “line fish” that is caught on a line – not in a net

**PAP (or Putu or Mealie-Mealie):** The porridge-like staple in South Africa

**SOSATIES:** South African kebabs



# TRADITION meets FASCINATION

## THE CULTURES AND CUSTOMS OF SOUTH AFRICA

**"GOEIE MORE!"**  
**"SAWUBONA!"**  
**"DUMELA!"**

That's "hello" in the languages of Afrikaans, Nguni and Sotho. And if you can use these words along with *tot siens*, *sawubona* and *sala kahle* for "goodbye", you are well on your way to endearing yourself to the South Africans.

In the smaller towns and villages, always greet everyone you pass – and try to use the proper honorific like Mr., Mrs. or Doctor. And even if you don't know their names – but know the position or occupation, use it ("*Dumela Mr. Fish-seller!*"). Nicknames are popular, but again, always use them with the proper title in front ("*Mr. Big-Man*").

When you are introduced to someone, take the time to acknowledge

their role, position or occupation. Make inquiries as to their health or the health or condition of close relatives and friends – even livestock!

When introduced to a group, greet seniors first.

While it is not appropriate for women and men to display any kind of affection in public, a man may take the hand of another man, and a woman the hand of another woman as a sign of friendship and trust when on the street or in a meeting.

At a gathering, always wait to be introduced to others before introducing yourself – and wait to be shown to your seat.

When leaving a group, always say farewell to each person individually. The group "wave goodbye" is not

appreciated. Young people sometimes wave farewell by extending the thumb and the pinky while keeping the other fingers folded against the palm, and moving the hand from side to side.

A handshake is a common greeting, but sometimes the left hand supports the right arm as a sign of extra sincerity. The handshake is often soft, not firm, indicating humility. If the hand is dirty, or otherwise occupied, people may extend their elbow or wrist. Some traditional men and women are uncomfortable shaking hands with each other in public.

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# SOUTH AFRICA

BY SHERYL FOSTER

**M**y love affair with South Africa began many years ago. A country where one day you can sip the finest of wine at the coolest of cafes in one of the world's prettiest cities; and the next day experience the raw, heart-stopping rush of nature. A place where you can travel back to the sites of civilizations created thousands of years ago, then fast forward to its modern cities. With 11 official

languages, three indigenous cultures, almost a dozen major cultural influences and six major regions, it is no wonder that Archbishop Desmond Tutu's "Rainbow Nation" moniker has struck as the pre-eminent description of South Africa today. If there is one defining aspect of South African culture, it is complexity — or diversity. To understand South Africa is to understand all of the South Africas — the cultures and the customs that make up this Rainbow Nation.



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**SOUTH AFRICA**  
It's impossible

[www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net)





## WHAT TO SAY— AND HOW TO SAY IT

**S**outh Africans speak in soft, muted tones. They look down upon boisterous, loud and aggressive sounding speech. There are some non-verbal things to be aware of when traveling to South Africa:

Pointing or beckoning with your

index finger is considered rude. Instead, beckon someone by turning your hand so that your palm is facing down and motioning inward with all four fingers. Directions are sometimes indicated with the chin or the head.

It's customary to use your right

hand when passing food or documents or touching people.

Making the “thumbs up” sign of approval is fine; but making the “OK” sign (a circle formed between the tips of the forefinger and the thumb) is not OK. The “V” for victory sign with the palm facing inward is considered very vulgar – but it is fine when the palm faces outward.

Avoid showing the soles of your shoes to anyone (sit with your feet flat on the floor) as it is considered by some to be rude.

Always smile – even if you have something difficult to say. It smoothes things over.

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## CUSTOMS—GIVING AND RECEIVING

**W**ho doesn't love a gift? If you are invited to a South African home, by all means bring along some special sweet for dessert or something for the children. Also, keep in mind the following: In traditional homes a man only gives a gift to a man, and a woman only to a woman.

Gifts are usually given and received with two hands – and sometimes may not be opened in the presence of the giver.

Avoid alcohol as a gift for Muslims and avoid giving leather gifts to the Hindu.

Because you will never be refused and because guests are always wel-

comed unannounced, be careful not to make a visit around mealtime. Instead come in the late morning or early evening.

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## CELEBRATE!

**T**here are plenty of traditional holidays in South Africa, but the real celebrations occur during each cultural group's festivals and holidays. Plan your trip so that you can catch at least one of these – and if you are lucky enough to be invited to a wedding – you must go.

**Cape Minstrel Carnival** – Occurs in early January to celebrate the New Year. Thousands parade in costume through the streets of Cape Town.

**KwaZulu-Natal Sardine Run** – Everyone plunges into the water to scoop up their fair share of the tasty fish during the Sardine's massive migration in late June.

**The Zulu Reed Dance Festival** – Each September young women present reeds to the Zulu King as a sign of their eligibility for marriage.

A personal visit with a Shangana

Isangoma – a traditional healer. He will show you his supply of medicines, then shake out the contents of his healing pouch, “read” your condition and prescribe the correct “muti”, or herbal medicine, for your condition.

## GETTING AROUND

**Directions:** If you ask someone for directions, he or she will generally make every effort to personally take to where you need to go – even if he or she is not sure, as it would be too disrespectful to not try to assist.

**Bargaining:** By all means visit the local open air market – it is a must, and bargaining is the name of the game. It is usually considered good luck to be the first or the very last customer of the day, so you may get

a better price either very early or late.

**Tipping:** Tipping is traditional. In restaurants, about 10% is customary, and the same is true for a taxi fare that was not previously negotiated when you got into the car (which is suggested). For most everything else, you need just a few coins.

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## NATIONAL HOLIDAYS:

January 1:	New Years Day
March/April:	Easter
March 21:	Human Rights Day
April 27:	Freedom Day
May 1:	Labor Day
June 16:	Youth Day
August 9:	National Women's Day
September 24:	Inheritance Day
December 16:	Reconciliation Day
December 25:	Christmas Day
December 26:	Goodwill Day