

# Bargains, bhajjiya AND bakeries

*Fordsburg is steeped in history and comes alive at the weekend with the Oriental Plaza and the market*

**M**ANY Joburgers are unaware that the bulk of the city's heritage lies in the CBD and surrounds, such as Fordsburg. Entwined in Joburg's legacy, Fordsburg started out as a mining town with a strong Pakistani/Indian mix. It was subsequently declared a "whites only area", until the mid-1970s, when Indians were allowed to set up shop in the Oriental Plaza – which remains the cornerstone of the colourful suburb. Housing around 360 shops and restaurants, the plaza is situated between Bree, Malherbe, Lilian and Main streets.

Admittedly, Fordsburg can be a bit overwhelming on one's first visit (especially on a Saturday at month-end), but you can easily and safely navigate the main points of interest on foot, which is sometimes easier than battling the traffic. I'd recommend starting your visit on a Friday afternoon, when the Muslim shopkeepers have reopened their stores after the weekly Friday prayer at the mosque – which usually ends at about 2pm.

Secure parking is available at the Oriental Plaza, which is the antithesis of the average Joburg mall. Instead of franchised stores, the shopkeepers themselves usually own each shop. Indians, Chinese,

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Somalis and Arabs all coexist in harmony, selling anything from jewellery to samoosas. Arrive hungry, because a trip to Fordsburg is a foodie's paradise. Go up to the first floor of the plaza, and visit World of Samoosas. This is an institution; with a steady stream of fresh, hot samoosas being fried continuously. Samoosas are priced at R36/dozen, and come in a range of flavours – my favourites being coconut and chicken. You can buy unfried samoosas to take home at R33/dozen. If you're preserving your waistline and aren't keen to deep fry them, simply brush with oil and bake in the oven for 20 minutes, adding oil every five minutes.

From there, walk to the other side of the balcony overlooking the open square, and head to Dubai Jewellery. Here, you can find a huge array of costume jewellery, as well as handbags. Prices are a bit on the steep side, so be prepared to negotiate. Walk along the balcony and



At Kebab Mahal you will get a roti filled with tender tikka chicken for R25.

PICTURE: HASMITA NAIR

cross over to the other side of the plaza, known as the Grand Bazaar. Make sure to stop at Leela's and Hanifa's, where you can find beautiful Indian garments like sarees and punjabis. You'll also spot a number of stores selling textiles, particularly curtain fabrics. All you have to do is measure your windows, choose your fabric preference and the rest is done for you – tailor-made curtains at a fraction of the cost you'd pay further north.

The Oriental Plaza closes at 5pm, which is when the Fordsburg Market starts coming alive. The market is situated in Mint Road, and you really can't miss it. It's an open air square which is an explosion of colour; clothing, DVDs (I unfortunately can't speak to the authenticity of these) and delicious street food all in one convenient space. Friday night is the best time to go: it's really the place to be for everyone who's anyone in Mayfair. You'll spot twentysomethings showing off the new sound in their cars, whistling at shy girls walking past. You'll also see housewives do-

ing their weekly grocery shopping – there is no better place to buy Indian vegetables and spices. And then you'll spot the "visitors" like you and me people who have driven 15 minutes or more just to be part of this Friday night magic.

I'm always a little stunned when I arrive. With all the delicious food around, one is not sure what to eat first. I inevitably opt for a samoosa (or five), as well as a puri patha, which is a fried flat bread with madumbi leaves rolled in a spicy gram flour paste. After walking around a bit, and stocking up on cardamom chai teabags and butter biscuits, I either cross the road and order a chip roll from Akhalwaya's (their toasted steak special is equally good), or head to the corner of the market, where Kebab Mahal is situated. This is my sanctuary. For R25, you can get a roti filled with tender tikka chicken – braaiied on a skewer – salad and chips, all topped with a secret sauce. The chicken is boneless, tender, and simply delicious – the meal hits the spot every single time. For dessert,

I'd choose a sweetmeat from the wide range on offer – my favourite is the gulab jamun, deep fried dough, made mainly from milk solids, then soaked in a light sugar syrup flavoured with cardamom and rosewater.

Other not-to-be-missed stops (open during the day only) include Hanover Bakery (10 Hanover Street) which is an Indian-style Halal bakery. Its specialities include pecan caramel loaf and mini chocolate cakes coated in the most divine creamy chocolate sauce.

Fordsburg is home to one of the city's most upmarket butcheries. United Butchery (19 Central Avenue) is famous for its spicy lamb sausages. Vegetarians should definitely visit Shayona (74 Church Street) – a completely non-meat restaurant which is renowned for its curries, especially those with home-made cheese (paneer) and for its mammoth assortment of sweetmeats.

For more ideas of things to do in and around Jozi, visit Hasmita's blog, [www.joziliciousblog.co.za](http://www.joziliciousblog.co.za)

## Foodies salivating over new pastry hybrid: the cronut

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IF YOU consider yourself as someone with a sweet tooth, you would probably have heard of the cronut. Half croissant, half doughnut, this groundbreaking pastry hybrid, conceptualised by chef Dominique Ansel of Dominique Ansel Bakery in Spring Street, New York, who has since trademarked the "cronut", has foodies all over the world salivating over his Instagram pictures, and bakeries worldwide trying to recreate this masterpiece, calling their versions "dough-ssants", "frissants" or "croughnuts".

Queues outside his modest New York bakery stretch around the block, with people waiting for hours to get their hands on two cronuts, the quota per person. If you want to order in advance, you have to order at least 50 and do this one month prior. August and September are already fully booked, so the bakery is taking or-

ders for October. The coveted creation is even being sold on the black market, with homeless people and students bearing the queue so they can resell their cronuts. There are people who are willing to pay up to eight times the \$5 (R52) price tag per cronut. According to the Huffington Post, at a steep \$80 a pop, one entrepreneur has offered "professional line waiters to save you time and get you your much deserved cronut".

The chef's creation is not to be mistaken as simply croissant dough that has been fried. With the entire process taking up to three days, the cronut is made with dough which has been likened to a croissant dough, then fried in grapeseed oil at a specified temperature. Once cooked, the cronut is rolled in sugar, filled with cream and topped with glaze. There is only one flavour of cronut every month, with the inaugural May flavour being rose vanilla.

Locally, only the bravest South



Jason Bakery's dough-ssant

Picture: Jason Lilley

African patisserie chefs have attempted replicating the cronut. After extensive research, I have found a sum total of two spots in the country where pastry-loving South Africans

can get a piece of the action.

Jason Lilley, of Jason Bakery in Bree Street, Cape Town, calls his version a dough-ssant and says the local response has been "epic". Unlike the

cronut, his is baked and not fried, and is made from a croissant dough using stone ground flour and 100 percent pure farm butter. The dough-ssants are coated in cinnamon sugar and then topped with a different flavour each week. Previous flavours include peanut butter and jelly, choc fudge cream and salted caramel. Dough-ssants retail for R25 each and are only available on Saturdays. To order, e-mail [orders@jasonbakery.com](mailto:orders@jasonbakery.com)

In Jozi, Linda Lipschitz, owner of Belle's Patisserie in the Blubird Shopping Centre, Birnam, and her French pastry chef, tried a few iterations before arriving at a perfect recreation of the cronut, which involves varying the butter to flour ratio significantly from an original croissant recipe, and then deep frying the dough. Belle's version is called a "crois-nut", also retails for R25 each, and is available in various flavours, including chocolate, caramel chip and custard. To order, call Belle's at 011 440 4474.