

TABLE FOR ONE

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STOP CARING ABOUT WHAT OTHERS THINK: HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT TOO



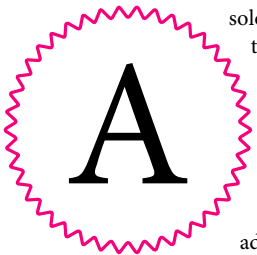
chefs, I found myself worrying about what personality faults the staff and my fellow diners imagined I had. After all, why were there no friends with me?

However, one encounter helped me get over this. I'd just plopped myself down at a gourmet burger eatery when I spotted another restaurant on my hit list next door. I was behind on my one-a-day reviews, so I hatched a cunning plan: I'd eat half the burger here, get the rest in a doggy-bag and then pop next door to eat half of something else there.

Everything went well: I hid the doggy-bag from the first restaurant in my handbag and discreetly took a table at the neighbouring tapas bar. Then the waitress came to take my order... the same one who'd just served my burger next door.

"Oh, so you're here now?" she asked. "Yeah, I like to try a bit of everything," I replied.

It turned out the two restaurants shared an owner and some staff. The waitress duly served my second lunch and I realised that nobody really cared but me, so I might as well just enjoy my meal. And I should order



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solo business trip takes us to an unfamiliar city, travel companions fall ill or we embark on an independent adventure. As travellers, we've all

been confronted with the need to seek entertainment and sustenance all by ourselves. It's a peculiar mix of freedom and possibility, with a big dollop of debilitating self-consciousness.

There are many things I don't mind doing alone. Renting a flat? Great – the freedom to turn up Beyoncé. Travelling the world? Yes – no compromising. Eating at home by myself? Perfect – table manners are optional!

Sitting alone in a restaurant having dinner on a Friday night? Eish...

Or at least, that's how I *used* to feel. Recently, I've eaten solo at 90 restaurants. As a nomadic writer and photographer, I'm always on

the hunt for an interesting project. I was ecstatic when I landed one of my most unusual ones ever: Cape Town restaurant reviewer for a travel advice company. I'd actually be paid to dine at the city's best eateries and describe the experience for fellow hedonists.

But there's always a catch. In this case, there were two: I could only get

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meals reimbursed for myself, not for a companion, and I had to maintain a frenetic pace of one review a day. I needed to head out to my first review immediately, so I had no time to fully consider how many hours I'd amass parked at a table all on my own.

Dining out alone is culturally taboo in SA. In fact, unaccompanied restaurant patrons are rarer than cheap crayfish, especially at dinner. So, instead of fully relishing food prepared by some of the world's top



that cheesecake too...

The greatest benefit of dining alone is that nobody's around to judge you. Your sense of taste is heightened when your tongue and brain aren't multi-tasking to maintain conversation. People-watching is easier too.

The next time you find yourself alone and hungry, don't let going solo prevent you from experiencing the best local flavours of an unfamiliar city and culture. But chew carefully. He who eats alone chokes alone. 🍴