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Galliova Awards 2024

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CHRISTI  
NORTIER  
mykitchen





# KING OF WINGS

Chef Strone Henry has created so many variations of the humble chicken wing that he's lost count. **Christi Nortier** chats to him about his secret sauce – an insatiable curiosity.

**I**t might not be an official title, but it's safe to say Strone Henry is the king of wings in Cape Town, if not all of South Africa. From classic buffalo wings drizzled with blue cheese sauce to wings caramelised in Mexican candy, Strone's reinvented it time and time again. But he's never been restricted: he's the mastermind behind the "donut burger", "lasagne sandwich" and "masala chicken roti Gatsby" – just to name a few of his concoctions. After running a successful and much-loved food business, Side Wing, he continues to follow the scent of adventure – from kitchen takeovers to product consulting. Where to next? He's taking it one venture at a time, on the wing. That's what got him here, after all...

## FOOD FASCINATION

"In my family, everybody enjoys cooking: my mom, dad, both sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles. On both sides, everybody's fascinated by food," reflects Strone. His own curiosity was kindled by chances to experiment alone in the kitchen from a young age. "I spent a lot of time at home alone because both my parents worked full time. During school holidays, my younger brother and I would mess around in the kitchen," he recounts. Strone started by mastering an egg sandwich – which involved a lot of egg stuck to the pan, he laughs. His taste tester was his younger brother, Ronin, who is also now a professional chef. "It was what was available at home, and it was nothing fancy: just



But at the core of it, he was drawn to food simply because he found joy in making, eating and sharing it. "I enjoyed feeding myself well and sharing that with friends. We'd go to a braai and everybody would go mad for the



egg and two slices of bread," Strone explains. "But that's where the curiosity started."

This interest was fed by new, unusual ingredients which his mom, Marcy, brought home from work. She's been working in the Woolworth's food department all Strone's life, so he was influenced by the new ingredients she brought home to quality test, he says.

salad that I made. So it's that, and the curiosity as well."

## ALL THE WORLD'S A PLATE

"I remember when I first realised that I wanted to cook professionally. At a career day at my high school, there was this one table that nobody was really visiting with a chef behind it. I went up and spoke to him,

## GET TO KNOW

and it turned out that it was chef Paul Hartmann from SA Chefs Academy. I got excited when he explained that the college offered a one-year course with every day spent in the kitchen. I immediately signed up and that was kind of it," Strone chuckles. "Before that, there were plans of being a paramedic. I wasn't clear on what I wanted to do, but food was kind of always in the background."

And so began "one of the best years of my life," Strone beams. He explains that a lot of people drop out of the course because they decide it isn't for them, but for him he'd do it again in a heartbeat – it was that much fun. "They teach you all the fundamentals, which puts the tools in your hands, and that really allows you to follow your curiosity," he reflects.

Strone's inquisitiveness never lets him settle on one aspect of cooking for too long, he explains with a laugh. "I've always wanted to try new things. I have never travelled outside of the country, but experimenting with ingredients from all over the world is like travelling to me. For example, I've been obsessed with ramen for the past two months: Every day, we eat ramen and try different styles and ingredients. I describe my food as kind of like global street food. I use unfamiliar ingredients and transform them into something South African or personal to me."



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## GET TO KNOW

### IT'S A WING THING

After graduating, Strone spent time cooking in an experimental burger joint, a winelands fine-dining restaurant and on set for *Taste* magazine. Food styling was full of creativity, but he missed making food for people. "We weren't serving customers, and we didn't get to see the reaction of people eating the food. I missed that," he reflects. One day, while giving him and his girlfriend, Ashleigh Frans, a lift home after a shoot, a colleague pointed out that the pair had all the skills needed to start a food business. Ashleigh had been photographing Strone's dishes and they were gaining traction online, with people begging to try it. A seed was planted.

In 2016, the Hot Ones YouTube series was taking off and the chicken wing's cult status reached a new high. Inspired, Strone bought 7kg of chicken wings and a 5-litre deep fryer. He set up shop in his mom's garage in Ottery, rolled up the garage door – and sold out. Chicken wings have been his go-to canvas ever since.

Why wings? "I've always liked experimenting with different sauces and a chicken wing is the perfect vehicle for that. They appeal to everyone, too," he explains. Every week, they'd debut a new sauce with favourites including those that played with alcohol, fruit and chilli (think brandy, peach and habanero). "Wings can be continuously reinvented.

I think that's where I developed the passion for what I'm doing now – constantly trying out dishes that have been on my mind and sharing it with people," he says.

Soon, Side Wing was a thing. Ashleigh was in charge of marketing, Strone took on the kitchen and together the couple ran their business. But their five-year-old daughter Ryu was the big boss. "Chicken wings are her favourite. She grew up eating it. She'd be running through the kitchen, talking to customers and playing in the front. She's actually in charge! It was a good time," Strone shares.

The cars lived outside as the garage was transformed into a kitchen. Strone's mission was to serve his community affordable food that they would usually have had to leave the neighbourhood to find in the CBD or Woodstock. And each week, customers came back to see what he'd come up with next. Soon it caught the attention of Maker's Landing, who asked Strone and Ashleigh to set up another shop at the V&A Waterfront premises. Side Wing happily obliged.

But the increasing price of food had Strone worried. "When we realised we would have to charge R120, not R65, for a burger to make money, it became challenging. I didn't believe in charging that. In the few years we'd been open, the price of ingredients had doubled. Eventually, we closed both shops. But we met so many cool food and media people at Maker's Landing and it gave us so many opportunities," Strone reflects.



"Wings can be continuously reinvented. I think that's where I developed the passion for what I'm doing now – constantly trying out dishes that have been on my mind and sharing it with people."



### STRONE'S COOLEST CREATIONS

When asked about his favourite chicken wing creations (to date), here's what Strone said:

1. Buffalo wings with blue cheese dip
2. Strawberry and habanero chili
3. Garlic Parmesan







### STRONE'S TOP 3 TIPS FOR CRISPY CHICKEN WINGS:

1. Buy a deep fryer. If that's too intimidating, then go for an air fryer.
2. Dry the wings before cooking. Leave them, uncovered, on a rack in the fridge overnight. Do a dry rub of salt, sugar and baking powder for extra crispy skin.
3. Make the sauce yourself – even if it's combining a few store-bought sauces. You always end up with something new.

### TAKING FLIGHT

Although the current product development consultations that Strone is doing are a “dream come true”, he’s also keen to do more and more pop-ups. “It’s a lot less pressure than a restaurant, because you’re not tied to a location or paying staff. You know exactly how many people you’ll be feeding, so you can control your stock more easily. It allows you to have a little bit more fun with what you’re doing. It’s not as stable as a permanent job, but it’s fulfilling for me. I need to enjoy what I’m doing, otherwise I get very miserable,” Strone explains.

Never one to limit himself, eventually he’d like to have a brick-and-mortar place of his own. “I don’t have a specific vision for it, but I like that because I think Side Wing kept us in a bit of a box with street food. Since we closed, I’ve wanted to broaden my horizons when it comes to making something a little bit more refined. I really like the small plate and sharing plate vibe, and street food – but with a twist, of course!” he grins.

Keep up with Strone’s adventures to see where he’ll pop up next by following him online: @kosgangsta

PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHLEIGH FRANS/WIDE WING SHOOT'S

### GET TO KNOW

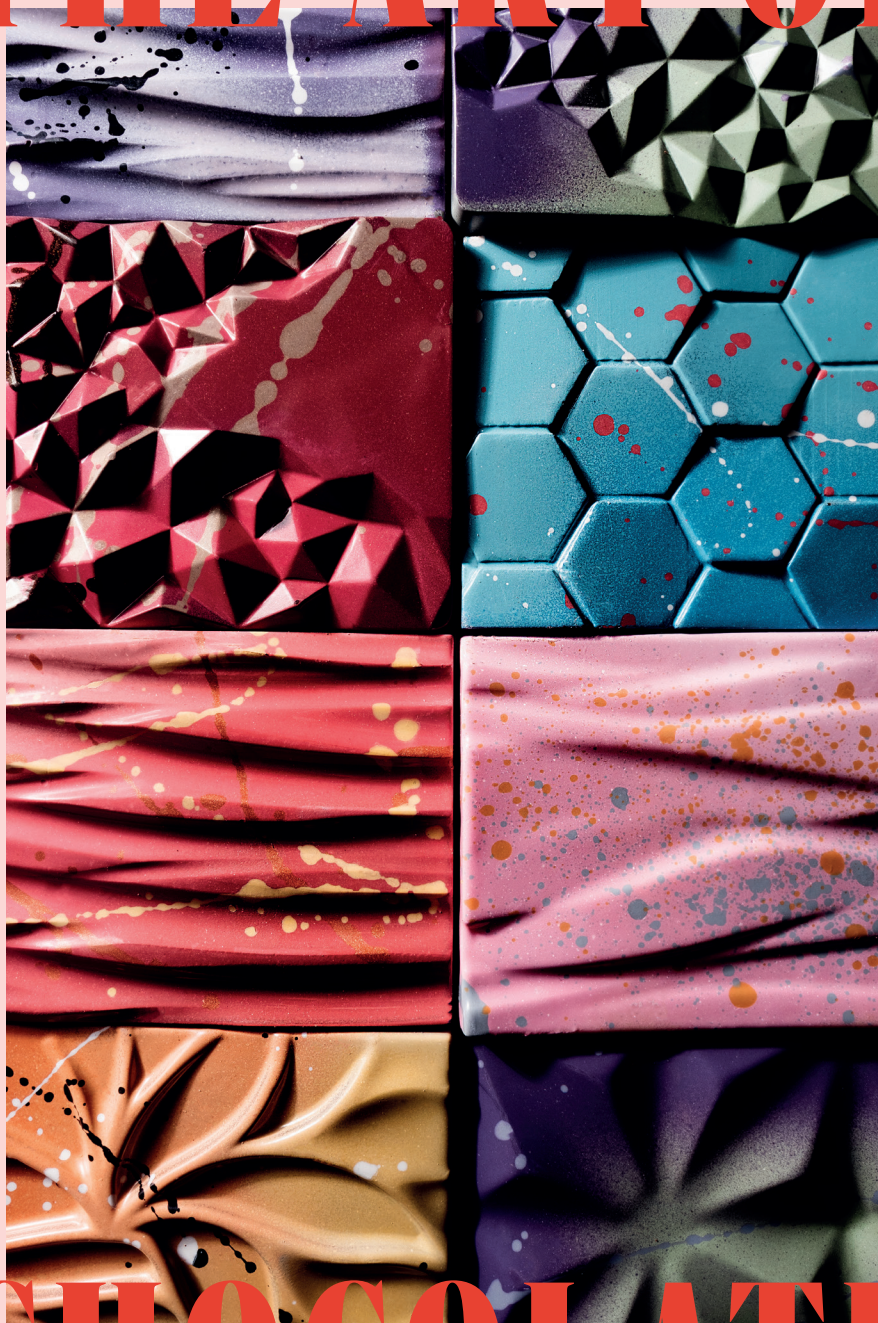


+ “I’ve wanted to broaden my horizons when it comes to making something a little bit more refined. I really like the small plate and sharing plate vibe, and street food – but with a twist, of course!”





# THE ART OF



# CHOCOLATE

Deep in Pretoria, there's an award-winning all-woman team of chocolatiers making art out of chocolate according to their own rules. Our Features Editor **Christi Nortier** got the scoop on Jack Rabbit Chocolate Studio's vision for taking African chocolate to the world.



## GET TO KNOW



**“Like wine, cacao beans have terroir. Chocolate tastes different depending on where, when and how the beans were grown. Our chocolate can teach people all about that.”**

– Stephanie Ceranio, Founder

Jack Rabbit Chocolate Studio is “humble but fancy AF”, where fine art and chocolate meet for the better, says founder Stephanie Ceranio. The studio makes all of its own chocolate, as well as every delicate filling and custom creation (they particularly encourage “totally out there” and “the crazier the better” chocolate ideas).

It may be a lot of people’s daydream to work with chocolate all day long, and it is a dream, but make no mistake: It’s a temperamental and unforgiving medium to make art with, is the resounding opinion of Stephanie and the team. But why keep tempering and trying? Because cacao that is grown in Africa should be crafted into chocolate creations by African chocolatiers, they believe – especially if said chocolatiers are as kick-ass as these women are.

Jack Rabbit Chocolates started in Stephanie’s kitchen. Whenever she had spare money, she would buy ingredients and challenge herself to push the boundaries of her pastry skills. Someone mentioned what a nightmare it is to temper chocolate and her ears pricked up. “I thought: ‘This sounds right up my alley!’ and I was due for my next challenge. Chocolate has been the most



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CHECK OUT THEIR  
INSTAGRAM PAGE

MERAKI IMPRESSIONS

and melt in your mouth, she adds. Then, the flavour has to pack a punch: “You should know exactly which flavour you’re eating without having to look at a label”, she insists. The team dreams up all their flavours themselves and changes them according to the season. Chocolate should feel special, she believes. “It should feel like a luxury to receive a box and open it to see these beautifully made and painted bonbons.”

The team has truly blossomed – from one chocolatier five years ago to a team of seven women, all trained in-house. And it is intentional that it’s an all-female team, confirms Stephanie. “In my work as an engineer, I would go out to site as an expert in my field but be totally dismissed in favour of the opinion of whichever man was in

the room. I didn’t want that kind of domination in my studio. It’s cliché, but true: Women have to work twice as hard to be taken seriously, especially in pastry and chocolate. I want to create a studio where women don’t have to fight for the space and the recognition they deserve. I wanted to create an opportunity for women in this very niche field: some of the chocolatiers have a background in pastry and others have no cooking experience but are so keen to learn. We have an environment where we all teach one another, and you can always turn to the person next to you for help.” And this team of seven are moving mountains. Last year brought them an opportunity to export to Japan,

challenging thing I’ve tried. It’s like a teenager and toddler in one. Just when you think you know everything about it, there’s something new it doesn’t like. But over time, you get to know when the chocolate is ready just by the smell or the way it moves. Once you get it right, it’s super rewarding”, she smiles. Frustrated that a lot of chocolate on the shelf tasted the same, Stephanie decided to do something about it. She envisioned making chocolate she enjoyed eating, which needed to tick some specific boxes. Firstly, it had to be fresh: their chocolate would never sit on a shelf for a year before reaching a customer, like commercial chocolate does. They should be super soft inside

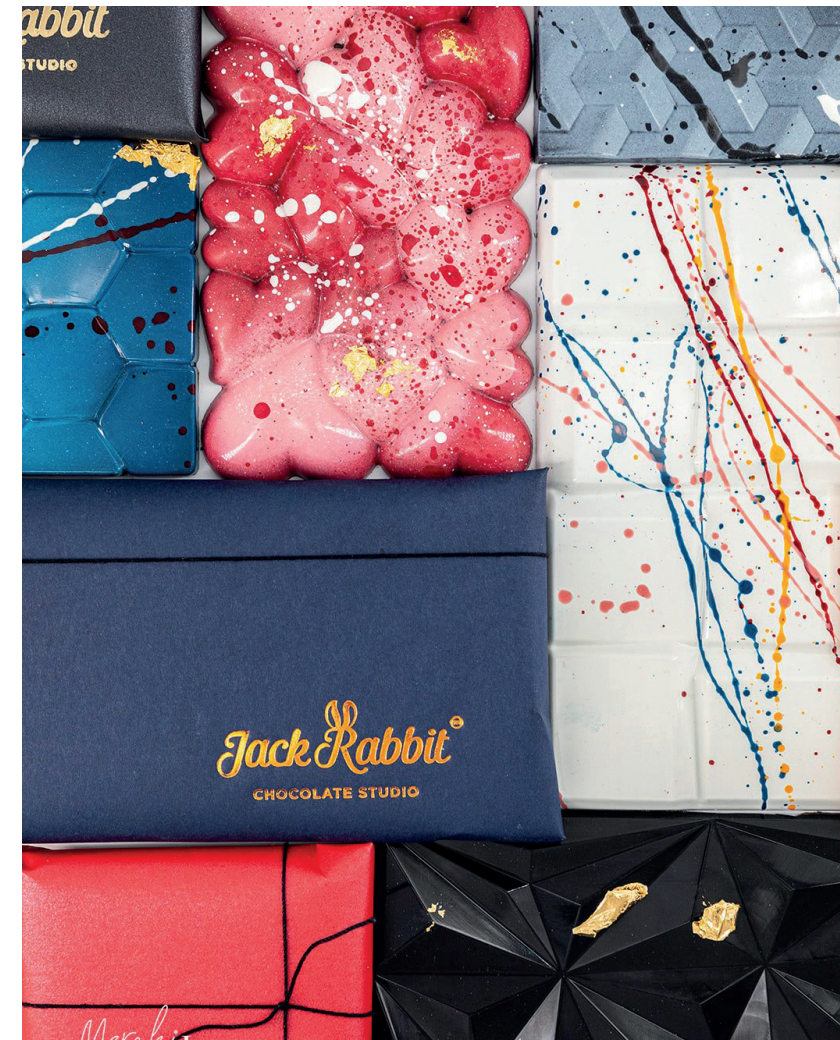
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a new home for their chocolate studio in Pretoria and the chance to scout out an expansion into Europe. The plan is to open a store in Amsterdam, the traditional European hub of chocolate, to say loud and proud that African chocolate by African chocolatiers has arrived – and it’s there to stay. “We can try and change the narrative that the best chocolate is made in Europe by Europeans. Even though we’re small, we can try. These women are creating incredible chocolates and every day I feel that theirs are better and super special. Each bar is different: We have never streamlined the process because we want each person to make each bar their own work of art. It’s an opportunity for them to create something totally for themselves. I want everyone to taste it and experience it. These women need to get the personal recognition that they deserve.”

Many of the bars are single origin slabs made with cacao beans sourced directly from farmers in Ghana, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania. In 2024, this is only going to increase in volume. “I

want to use even more African cacao beans, so that we can create additional fair-trade opportunities for African farmers plus make something special. We literally have a guy who drives his bakkie to the farms and fetches the beans for us! And that way, we make it totally our own. Like wine, cacao beans have terroir. Chocolate tastes different depending on where, when and how the beans were grown. Our chocolate can teach people all about that.”

You’d think that maybe Stephanie is tired of eating chocolate by now, but you’d be very wrong. “I don’t think I’ll ever get sick of it. I’m not addicted to it, but I do feel that I’m an unpleasant person if I don’t have chocolate,” she chuckles. “I don’t know it’s just being around chocolate or if it’s being around my team, but I enjoy it every single day. I feel such pride for everything my team has made. I can never get tired of just being in awe of their capabilities. When I’m away from the studio, other chocolate just doesn’t scratch that itch. Their chocolate is just that special.”



PHOTOGRAPHS: MERAKI IMPRESSIONS, SUPPLIED

## MEET THE TEAM



**LUCIA SITHOLE**  
CARAMEL EXPERT

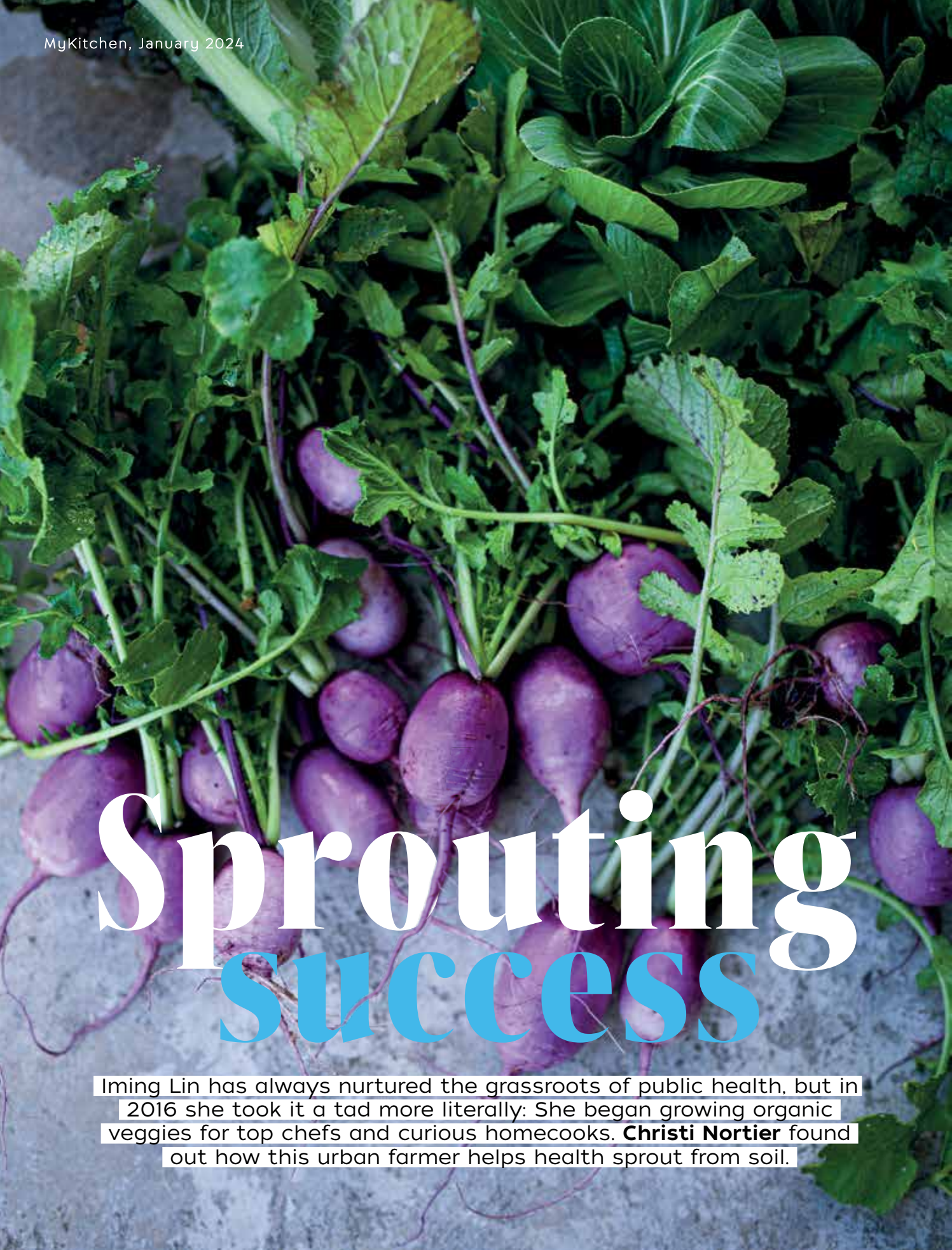
“I got to hand deliver two of our bonbons to the World International Chocolate Competition finals in Germany in 2022. I created one of the bonbons and it got above 85%, which means it’s pretty good! It felt like I was dreaming, because I never thought I would achieve so much after just a year of working here. It was tough being a young black woman going to a foreign country for the first time on my own, but it was one of my best experiences. I grew because I met new people and saw a different culture.”



**JERMINAH MASWANGANYI**  
CHOCOLATE AFICIONADO

“I think it’s important for Africans to make chocolate with African cacao beans because we need to be proud of our products. I feel like Europe and other countries don’t know our chocolates and they should. I’ve taken our chocolates to Ghana and Mozambique, and I also think Africans need to look past the high price and appreciate how good our own chocolate is. If you taste it, you’ll understand why it’s so special”.





# Sprouting Success

Iming Lin has always nurtured the grassroots of public health, but in 2016 she took it a tad more literally: She began growing organic veggies for top chefs and curious homecooks. **Christi Nortier** found out how this urban farmer helps health sprout from soil.



“Farming is not about copying methods, but understanding why people do certain things and then adapting it to your context”

Iming can remember exactly where she was walking when she decided that she wanted to pursue farming. She was working on a social enterprise project in Cape Town, far away from her native home of California. For her, work had always needed to be three things: socially and environmentally meaningful, as well as intellectually stimulating. Being a public health specialist ticked all those boxes, but she suddenly realised that farming could provide these aspects, too. An avid gardener, this idea had been taking root for a while.

Flash forward eight years and she has her own small-scale urban farm, Meuse Farm, in Hout Bay. It supplies the Western Cape’s fine-dining restaurants with seasonal organic veggies of unusual varieties, plus ever-changing veggie boxes to experimenting home cooks. And no, she doesn’t see another radical career change anytime soon...



## WHO TAUGHT YOU TO GROW VEGETABLES?

I’ve always been interested in growing veggies. From when I was a little kid, my parents allowed me to use the rototiller in our home garden in Silicon Valley, California. I’ve always been interested in food issues but farming never seemed like a vocation option.

Once I realised that I wanted to learn about farming (it really is very different to gardening!), I started looking for volunteering and apprenticeship opportunities.

There weren’t many options in South Africa, so I volunteered at the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, an educational non-profit farm in the USA. My husband Jaco, and our three dogs, went with me and he did a fine furniture making apprenticeship. Two months turned into quite a lot longer, and we spent time on other farms to learn the business aspect. It showed me that farming is not about copying methods, but understanding why people do certain things and then adapting it to your context. I had to learn about Hout Bay’s seasons and its seasonality, soil, local problem birds and the rhythm of the market.

And I learn so much from Instagram. I heard

someone say that small-scale farms are the most wholesome little corner of social media, and it really is. There are so many little networks of really niche stuff that’s full of knowledge sharing. My current interest is soil biology, and that’s a whole rabbit hole to go down!



GET TO KNOW

HOW HAS THIS FARM DEVELOPED OVER THE YEARS?

I first came to Hout Bay in 2002 on a tour with the University of Cape Town. I thought it was such a beautiful place, so I moved here in 2005. When we were looking for a plot, we wanted it to be close to home. There are a lot of big plots with horses on them, but we couldn't find anything available at the time. So Jaco went onto Google Maps and saw this plot. We did some digging and eventually, a year later, we managed to buy it when we came back to South Africa in 2017.

We started in March with Asian greens, flowers and herbs for fine-dining restaurants because they are more seasonal, pay well and are generally more predictable with bookings as compared to the more everyday, less seasonal restaurants. Our first daughter, Willow, was born in late October 2017. It wasn't great timing!

Three years later, we added the bottom section and expanded the rows to grow more varieties. We spent all of lockdown here, moving the cold room and office to make way for new beds. Meanwhile, I was pregnant with Scout. It was a beautiful time.

Now I run the growing side of things with my small team while Jaco drives the tractor, builds things and helps with the business side. Last year, we grew 150 varieties of over 50 crops on just one hectare of land.

WHAT IS THE THINKING BEHIND THE VEG BOXES?

Before and during lockdown, I started Food Flow with a friend of mine to get quality produce to local community kitchens. We used R2 million in donations to buy food from small farmers. We started selling weekly Meuse veggie boxes to home cooks in October 2020, something we'd planned to do for a while. There are some staples, what Jaco calls "normal people food", and then some unusual things like fresh horseradish or daikon radishes. We don't buy in anything, so these cooks know that everything

+ "We discovered that our community is the chefs, the home cooks and the people who attend our events. We are excited to grow that community of people who care."



really is organic and from this soil. These customers care about quality and positive change, like we do.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO WELCOME THE PUBLIC ONTO THE FARM?

We always wanted the farm to be semi-public, but we were never sure

how. I'm very protective of the private time on the farm. We had a sign for the farm in season four, but we only hung it in season five! I am definitely an extrovert that's becoming more introverted. So when there are people here, I want them to feel like they're here with a purpose – to learn, for a meal or to help out. I don't ever



want it to be just a place for Instagram selfies. We have had a few open days where people can come to the farm to attend a workshop using farm products, take a farm tour, buy veggies or eat a lunch made almost entirely from the farm veg. But every event has been so much fun and it's lovely meeting people who are excited about the farm, the food, a chef, making soap or arranging flowers. We're trying to curate it so that it brings together people who care and are actually interested. And I think those interactions are really great.

HOW HAS FARMING CHANGED THE WAY YOU COOK?

I think having kids has changed the way we cook in a much bigger way! But in all seriousness, it has made us cook more seasonally and experiment with varieties we wouldn't have access to otherwise. We look at what we have and then we find a recipe to match it, or we do a lot of substitutions to use it all up!

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR THE FARM?

On the first day at Stone Barns, Jaco commented that it will be interesting to see if the reality of farming matches our idea of it. On the last day, I said to him that the reality is even better. Coming back to SA, we wondered who our community would be because there aren't a lot of small growers. But we discovered that our community is the chefs, the home cooks and the people who attend our events. We are excited to grow that community of people who care.

I think I will still be farming in the next five or ten years because there are so many wormholes to explore. My current interests are ethnobotany (the study of how particular people use a specific plant), soil science and landscaping to create habitats for wildlife on the farm. I also want to explore food as medicine, especially in relation to mental health, and how the farm can have a more intentional social impact. That's the next project.



QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS WITH IMING

1. WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE VEGGIE TO EAT?

I think it's still the greens from childhood, like broccoli and peas.

2. WHAT WAS YOUR DREAM JOB AS A KID?

A veterinarian, long-form journalist, photojournalist or doctor.

3. WHICH AMERICAN FOOD DO YOU MISS?

The chewy cookies! South Africa doesn't do a good cookie or brownie – they're very cake-like. But the best I've had here are the brownies at La Petite Moo and the salted spelt chocolate chip cookie at South Yeaster.

4. AFTER DINNER TREAT?

Good quality dark chocolate.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ASHLEY NEWELL, BRUCE TUCK, CLAIRE GUNN



## GET TO KNOW

# BUON APPETITO!

Two Italian South African families give us a seat at their table to talk about their restaurants, heritage and adoration for the food philosophies that made them.

The one thing you'll find in almost every South African town, for better or worse, is an Italian restaurant. We have an insatiable appetite for cheesy pizza, pasta swimming in sauce and three-tiered tiramisu. So, we owe our gratitude to those restaurateurs who not only dish up the Italian food we adore, but also give us a healthy serving of their culture – and love – which makes our food scene and knowledge so much richer for it. Meet two of South Africa's pioneering Italian South African food families, who show us how it's done.

## THE TURILLIS

"Flat white/cortado are swear words in this caffè!!!" reads a handwritten sign above the coffee menu at Lello's Caffè, in De Waterkant, Cape Town. Below it, a sticker of the Italian flag is proudly displayed. Please order and pay at the counter, choose a chair at a café table and wait for your single shot coffee with tempered milk, all served the traditional way. The walls are stone, the ceiling is low and there's a minute van parked outside. As they say: when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

The Turilli siblings who own and run Lello's Caffè, and the older Lello's Deli right around the corner, are proud of their Roman and South African heritage. It all started with their nonno (grandfather), Lello, from the small town of Rieti just outside Rome. He taught his son, Ricky, everything he knew about not just making Italian food but also "The Italian

Life", which involves sharing food around a table with people you love.

After emigrating to South Africa after the Second World War, Lello worked as a mechanic (with his Italian chef buddies cooking up a storm in the backrooms of the garage) while Ricky started an illustrious, decades-long career as a restaurateur. His most recent restaurant, Scarpetta, was all about this Italian life. He converted an old Woodstock house into a laid-back space where the menu changed depending on the season and what Ricky, "The Big Boss", felt like making that day. He visited all the tables personally, sharing his food philosophy and explaining the dishes with infectious passion and humour.

It's no wonder then that his two children, food stylist and former MK food editor Chiara, and fashion photographer Danillo, followed in his footsteps. In October 2021, the siblings joined forces and opened Lello's Deli to honour all that their nonno had taught them. They stock top quality Italian and local products, along with their homemade cold meats and paninis. The pair have made it their mission to find brilliant local artisanal products and share their finds at the deli. You can also find some of Scarpetta's finest offerings as take-home servings

and the legendary desserts made by their mom, Melissa (who's day job is nursing).

Just two years later, the siblings opened Lello's Caffè just around the corner to bring true Italian coffee culture to Cape Town. Here, they serve their own dark roast coffee (based off Lello's own recipe) alongside 48-hour fermented schiacciata panini (Italian sandwiches) and cornetti (an Italian version of a croissant). The family often return to Italy to savour their heritage and constantly learn new things. They take their social media followers along for the ride, too, creating a vibrant community in the process – which is brought together at pop-up events. As nonno Lello became a fixture at Ricky's restaurants, Ricky also became a beloved face at Lello's Deli. A local legend was lost in 2024 when Ricky passed. Chiara and Danillo are planning to open a new place soon "in honour of our nonno Lello and now our dad, aka The Big Boss".

"We aim to build a community through bringing food stories to life," says Chiara. "Food nostalgia, dishes that never left your mind, vintage recipes. Bringing those fond memories to life of Sunday night dinners where famiglia and friends gather around a table of humble food."

**+** "We aim to build a community through bringing food stories to life ... dishes that never left your mind, vintage recipes. Bringing those fond memories to life of Sunday night dinners where famiglia and friends gather around a table of humble food"



At Lello's Deli, you can grab panini on the go.



Mama Turilli is a nurse by day, tiramisu wizard by night.



Lello's Deli stocks only the finest Italian imports, hand selected by the Turillis.



Lello's cornetti alla crema chantilly are filled with whipped citrus Italian custard.







The Viljoens taught Joburg that Italy is not just about pizza and pasta!



SCAN FOR A PEEK  
AT THE VILJOEN'S  
CAFÉ DE SOL  
BOTANICO

## THE VILJOENS/ TRECCANIS

The most important ingredient in Italian food is love – followed by simple and fresh ingredients, says Chiara Viljoen. That is the kind of food she grew up eating, since three of her four grandparents hail from Italy. Her mother, Luciana, grew up there, too. As a result, she and her brother Ryan are “proudly three-quarters Italian”!

The siblings and Luciana started Café del Sol in Joburg in 2007 after realising they’d rather share “this taste of love” with clients and “touch people’s hearts through food”, rather than stay in unfulfilling jobs. Nearly two decades later, they’ve added two more restaurants and changed their local communities’ perspective on Italian food for the better. Locals now know all about risotto, artichokes and other ingredients that seemed foreign to them back in the mid-2000s. They have spread their knowledge even further afield with their cookbook, *Our Italian Legacy of Love*, published in 2021 (and featured in May 2023 issue of MK).

The family’s winning philosophy is to never compromise on their ingredients. “We import the best, believe in freshly handmade pasta and dishes, hormone-free and grass-fed protein where possible and sustainable fish. We strive for food that has amazing flavour and hasn’t been played with too much. Italian food should make you feel good after eating and not be heavy,” Chiara explains. Their South African heritage plays a role

in their food, too. “Being Italian South African, we are open to all food tastes from around the world. We even have a few Asian-inspired dishes on our menu. We’ve incorporated our South African Italian roots into our menu with dishes like springbok carpaccio, beautiful cuts of South African meats

like fillet on the bone and milk tart panna cotta. We’ve also adjusted our pastas to the South African palate: In Italy, pasta is the star of the dish with little sauce, but in South Africa the sauce is the star,” she adds.

After 17 years, it seems they’re just getting started. Chiara, Ryan and their mother

Luciana have their sights set on opening new restaurants in lifestyle estates, since the sense of community living in these areas reminds them of the Italian way of life. Cape Town and Mauritius, keep an eye out for a Café del Sol near you soon! It’s all about “serving up wholesome, Italian food made with love”.



“Being Italian South African, we are open to all food tastes from around the world ... We have also adjusted our pastas to the South African palate: In Italy, pasta is the star of the dish with little sauce, but in South Africa the sauce is the star”





Cafe del Sol adds Italian style to every dish.



## GATHER ROUND

SOME OTHER ITALIAN TABLES TO TAKE NOTE OF...



### ICE DREAMLAND, Plettenberg Bay

This is an Italian lunch as it should be: children playing, sunshine streams through vines, pizzas and salads arrive at the table just as you need to dig into another dish and there's Italian flowing out of the kitchen window. Marco has been making coveted mozzarella, ricotta and

yoghurt there for decades and, in recent years, opened a Sunday lunch pizzeria and gelateria next to his home. His whole family is involved, including his daughter Chiara – yes, the third Chiara on our list! Set aside the whole afternoon – you won't want to leave!



### REMO'S ITALIAN, Gqeberha

Renzo and Franco Scribante started a restaurant in 2007 to honour their late brother's boyhood dream of opening a place together. Today, fittingly, they have three spots: one in Gqeberha, Joburg and Durban. Dine out on dishes made according to their mother's recipes,

sip on imported Italian coffee, admire the black-and-white Scribante family pictures and browse their deli of Italian staples.



### COLTEMPO DELI, Durban

Father and son Hylton and Paul Rabinowitz started selling their homemade dry-cured meats at Durban food markets in 2014, but soon realised they needed a bigger home for their increasingly popular Italian salamis, prosciutto, bresaola and the like.

You can visit them at their Col'tempo deli and cafe for a bite to eat and to shop their products, which now goes way beyond cold meats!



# It's a kind of MAGIC

Chef and businesswoman Sepial Shim creates plates of South Korean food that's as good for your heart as it is for your health. She tells **Christi Nortier** about the power of fermentation, what it's like to study with your son and why braai salt rocks...



**L**ining the walls of Sepial Shim's workspaces are jars of garlic, ginseng, tea, baby radish, grapes, peaches and cucumber fermenting in their own specific concoction. One day, when they're ready, they'll pop onto the menu of either her restaurant Sepial's Kitchen, her market stall, her workshop space The Fermentary or her dumpling joint The Ugly Dumpling. If you'd told her five years ago that she'd be running four South Korean food businesses in Cape Town, she might have laughed. But also, maybe not – she admits she finds it hard to say no to an adventure and a challenge.

## DID YOU ALWAYS HAVE DREAMS OF WORKING IN THE FOOD INDUSTRY?

Food only came into my life recently. My mother never allowed me to cook – she wanted me to have a career, and not stay at home to look after a family like her. After working in PR and marketing in South Korea, I realised I was suffering from burnout. My brain didn't function well, so I spent time at home baking. I shared the food with my neighbours and I enjoyed that. Around that time my son stopped

studying business and wanted to do something practical like cooking. I had to drop him off and fetch him there every day, so I thought: why not join the classes? I ended up enjoying it more than he did! I had already done all the silly things in my 20s, so I could focus and it was good for me. Cooking became my therapy. Now, my son helps me to run the business. While working with family is never easy, there are definitely more pros than cons.

## WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT WORKING IN FOOD?

I never planned to have so many things on the go! Lockdown changed the business a lot, and I had to find ways to create work for my staff as some doors closed and new opportunities came our way. I couldn't really say no. We started with a small place in Salt River and we still have those old regulars visiting us now. They feel like family to me. People really enjoy the Korean Fried Chicken, which means we cook chicken like crazy! It sometimes means we're too busy to try other things, but they can have as much Korean Fried Chicken as they want because it also supports my other projects, like The Fermentary.

## WHY IS FERMENTATION SO CLOSE TO YOUR HEART?

It's one of the great strengths of South Korean food and is really beneficial for everyone. It doesn't cost much but the result is wonderful. Since the economy isn't great and our climate is changing, fermentation can help people create something that is amazing out of very common foods, like cabbages, so that everyone can have something healthy that isn't boring. It also reduces food waste. I really want to contribute to South Africa, and I hope I can do that by sharing my knowledge of fermentation to help the public and make fermented products more accessible. It's also very exciting! You are never 100% sure how it will turn out because there are so many factors you cannot control. I sometimes even pray for good results – but that's the beauty of it, like our lives. We are just humble before Mother Nature.





## QUICK-FIRE QUESTIONS

### FAVOURITE SOUTH AFRICAN INGREDIENTS?

I like to use rose geranium and buchu to make drinks because they are so unique and versatile. But I really love braai salt! I take it back to South Korea as gifts – they say it works well on the Korean barbecue, too!

### BEST MEAL TO MAKE AT HOME?

Lamb chops on the braai (although I make my son cook it), served with quick soy sauce, pickled onion, rice and a side of my kimchi. No other sauce necessary.

### SWEET OR SAVOURY?

I like a little sweet with my savoury, and a little savoury with my sweet.

### BEST COOKBOOKS?

*The Noma Guide to Fermentation* by David Zilber and René Redzepi and *The Flavor Bible* by Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page. The recipes are so exact and include lesser-known food pairings.

### ESSENTIAL KITCHEN TOOL?

A good, sharp knife that's maintained every day.



“Fermentation can help people create something that is amazing out of foods that are quite common, like cabbages, so that everyone can have something healthy that isn't boring.”

### WHAT IS YOUR COOKING PHILOSOPHY?

I'm not an amazing philosopher or somebody who can talk big words but simply put: I like to serve good food and make people feel good. I believe that if somebody feels good about themselves, then they will have a positive energy. They will take that home with them and make their life positive. Then, I hope the world can get better – even just a tiny bit.

### WHAT DO YOU ENJOY OUTSIDE OF THE KITCHEN?

At the moment, my life is all about working so there's not much time spent away from it. My work is now done more in front of the computer writing emails, dealing with numbers, and so on. That is actually where I

spend much of my time, rather than in the kitchen. If you visit Makers Landing, you'll probably watch me doing paperwork in a corner behind a glass door. I hope to retire soon and spend my days stroking my neighbour's cat! When I'm not working, I'm probably reading something – there are too many things to read! I enjoy articles about new findings in nutrition and cooking, as well as the history of food. The more I know about food history, the more connected I feel. The world is now created by exchanges, which I believe is more interesting than trying to be 'authentic' to regional cuisines.

**Follow @sepialskitchen for news on Sepial's workshops, new dishes and special projects.**