



Press Release – TsoGo Sun Hotels – 04/06/2019

Women chefs shine at TsoGo Sun Hotels

Food and beverage is key to any hotel offering, and in the case of TsoGo Sun Hotels (www.tsogosun.com), which prides itself on creating unique and memorable food experiences. Within this context, the group's chefs are the heroes and heroines who consistently create and deliver world-class cuisine. In honour of Women's Month and as a tribute to the unique feminine touch in the kitchen, TsoGo Sun Hotels has put the spotlight on nine women chefs representing varying levels in the kitchen hierarchy and different properties, for their culinary contribution to the group's offerings.

Ravi Nadasen, COO for TsoGo Sun Hotels, recognises the role that the group's chefs play in ensuring that food and beverage experiences in its properties are always excellent. "Our philosophy is founded on delivering the highest culinary standards with significant investment in our chefs' progress and career development. We're extremely proud of the progress we have made in achieving an equitable balance in this sector."

TsoGo Sun Hotels has a total of 557 female chefs at different levels of training throughout the group, out of a total of 1 186 chefs, representing 47%, which surpasses the trend reported by Chefify.net in January 2019 that, "the culinary industry is not a particularly positive example of a strong gender balance". It stated that only 20.9% of chefs in the USA and less than 20% of the professional chef population in the UK are women.

The nine chefs chosen to represent TsoGo Sun's women chefs for Women's Month are Nthabiseng Phiri, Demi Chef de Partie at Medeo at The Palazzo (<https://www.tsogosun.com/medeo>); Precious Malebye, Sous Chef, and Phumzile Skosana, Pastry Sous Chef, both at 54 on Bath's fine-dining Level Four restaurant (<https://www.tsogosun.com/level-four>); Gouwah Kafoor, Head Chef at Sandton Convention Centre (<https://www.tsogosun.com/sandton-convention-centre-scc>); Beverly Bogatsu, Pastry Chef at Sandton Sun's San Deck & Restaurant (<https://www.tsogosun.com/san-restaurant>); Kirsten Howell, Executive Sous Chef at Southern Sun Montecasino's Punchinello's restaurant (<https://www.tsogosun.com/punchinellos>); Meloné Erasmus, Sous Chef at InterContinental Johannesburg OR Tambo (<https://www.tsogosun.com/quills>); Amina Lebelo, Executive Chef at Riverside Sun (<https://www.tsogosun.com/riverside-sun/restaurants-bars>); and Marlene Makinson, Executive Chef, Vigour & Verve, Cape Town (<https://www.tsogosun.com/vigour-verve-cape-town>). [Brief bios of each chef follow.]

Nadasen says, "These nine chefs are a representative sample of TsoGo Sun Hotels' female chefs around the country. They are all recognised and appreciated for the consummate skills, talents, creativity and passion for cooking that they bring to the table every day – and we believe it is fitting to share their stories about their rise through the ranks as chefs."

TsoGo Sun Hotels' professional culinary learning options are available through TsoGo Sun Academy, and offer teaching and training that ensures chefs across all levels are competent in their jobs and can develop to more senior positions. Levels include cooks and commis chefs, chefs de partie, sous chefs, and executive chefs, and courses include mandatory training to ensure chefs can meet the requirements of their jobs, and optional levels for additional skills building.

tsogosun.com



Press Release – Tsogo Sun Hotels – 04/06/2019

Nadasen encourages all the female chefs of Tsogo Sun to continue to shine in their careers and to make the most of the opportunities for progress and development that the group and the industry offers – impacting the food and beverage offering in the country for the better. “Tsogo Sun Hotels is proud of all our chefs, but in this month of celebrating women, we acknowledge their powerful contribution to our team, their engagement with colleagues, their focus on development, and their overall positive, hard-working, and creative approach to their craft.”

Brief bios on nine Tsogo Sun chefs

Gouwah Kafoor, Head Chef, Sandton Convention Centre

Chef Gouwah grew up in Cape Town and qualified from Cape College with a National Diploma Course in Hospitality Services and Hotel Management in 1997. She has worked extensively in hotels and restaurants in the Western Cape, as well as in Malaysia and UAE. She has been with Tsogo Sun since 2006 and Sandton Convention Centre since 2009. She was appointed Head Chef in 2016.

“The experience I have gained and my career development have equipped me with the skills to manage food and the art of food, and a love of cooking that drives me to strive for perfection. I know what excellence means, and for me the task is not complete until I have given my best.”

Meloné Erasmus, Pastry Chef, Intercontinental Johannesburg OR Tambo

Chef Meloné, who grew up in Vereeniging, started her training with Southern Sun in 2004 as one of the first students to complete the National FPC04 Professional Cookery Diploma, Theta, through Tsogo Sun. She has worked at various hotels and lodges in South Africa, with 12 years at Tsogo Sun.

Her passion? Creating mindblowing desserts and teaching other chefs to do what she does best.

Who inspired you to be a chef? I always enjoyed cooking with my great-grandmother as a child – which is where my love of cooking started. I love creating exciting new dishes and seeing others enjoy my creations.

Favourite comfort food? Lamb curry with lots of fresh dhania.

Personal signature dish? Deconstructed lemon meringue tart.

Nthabiseng Phiri, Demi Chef de Partie, Palazzo

Chef Nthabiseng matriculated from Nondumo High School in Nquthu in northern KwaZulu-Natal. She started her culinary career at Panarotti’s, followed by the Indaba Hotel, before finding her niche at Palazzo in 2008. She has been in the industry for 13 years.



Press Release – Tsogo Sun Hotels – 04/06/2019

What inspired you to become a chef? I love cooking and I love food. I felt I needed to learn more about the industry to have an opportunity to be more creative. Being a chef allows me to be creative and inspire others, which motivates me.

Favourite comfort food? Pasta and seafood.

Personal signature dish? Lobster tail salad, which came naturally from my love of seafood.

Beverly Bogatsu, Pastry Chef, Sandton Sun

Chef Beverly, who grew up in Rustenburg, fell in love with the culinary world by default when she was too late to register for her dream course in interior design in Pretoria. Instead she opted for national diplomas in Food & Beverage and Professional Cooking at Tshwane North College – and hasn't looked back. She spent five years working in the UAE, and the past five years at Tsogo Sun hotels in Johannesburg.

Culinary philosophy? It's simplicity. Complicated recipes are not for me. I use seasonal fresh products and work on creating a master dish that attracts the eye.

What do you love about being a pastry chef? The opportunity to be artistic. I didn't become an interior designer as planned, but I love being creative and sketching my ideas for plating.

Amina Lebelo, Executive Chef, Riverside Sun

Chef Amina grew up in Vereeniging, and after matriculating and doing internships at local hotels, she attended Witwatersrand Hotel School and qualified in Food & Beverage Management. She has been in the industry for 31 years. She joined Sandton Sun and Towers Intercontinental in 1995, where she worked until 2012, when she spent four years at Birchwood Conference Centre, returning to Tsogo Sun's Riverside Sun Resort in 2016.

Who inspired you to become a chef? My sister was the first who inspired me to become a chef. But as I worked in hotels I had many mentors who played different roles in motivating me. People saw potential in me and helped me in my career. I make sure I never stop learning.

Challenges you've faced in the kitchen? In the 1980s, women were almost non-existent in kitchens and I had many years of fighting to be recognised and promoted. I learned to work under pressure. Being a female in a male-dominated department was stressful and there was no room for mistakes. I just absorbed as much information as I could, I worked hard and persevered. Stealing with the eyes was my weapon of revenge to my male colleagues!

Comfort food? Home-baked cookies with tea.

Signature dish? Tuna Asian style – it's rich in freshness.



Press Release – Tsogo Sun Hotels – 04/06/2019

Precious Malebye, Sous Chef, Level Four, 54 on Bath

Chef Precious matriculated in Rustenburg, and obtained her City & Guilds Chef's Certificate from SA School of Cookery in 2011. She joined Tsogo Sun's Southern Sun Montecasino as a Commis Chef, before moving to Level Four restaurant as a Demi Chef, working her way up to her position as Sous Chef last year.

Precious is a creative thinker with sound knowledge of food trends, a strong commitment to quality, service and sustainability in the restaurant, and a flair for cooking in a fast-paced kitchen.

Who inspired you to become a chef? My Mom and sister. I baked with my Mom when I was a child, and helped my sister in her restaurant.

Challenges faced? Some kitchens have been sexist, and long hours – especially now that I'm expecting my second child – can be difficult.

Comfort food? Any seafood.

Signature dish? Anything with prawns.

Phumzile Skosana, Pastry Sous Chef, Level Four, 54 on Bath

Chef Phumzile matriculated from Dominican Convent School in Johannesburg, and after three years of studies and administrative work, she found her niche in the culinary industry in 2009. Phumzile obtained her Southern Sun Professional Cookery Certificate and joined Southern Sun Hyde Park as a Commis Chef. In 2016 she moved to Palazzo and a year later to 54 on Bath, where she was promoted to Pastry Sous Chef in 2017.

What inspired you to become a chef? I was in art class where I collected recipes. I knew that's what I wanted to do.

Challenges you have faced? I have worked in some good kitchens and haven't experienced some of the challenges my fellow female chefs have.

Comfort food? Hot wings and chips

Signature dish? I like to cook using chocolate; it's my favourite ingredient.

Kirsten Howell, Executive Sous Chef, Southern Sun Montecasino

Chef Kirsten, from Johannesburg, was inspired by her mother to give up her law studies and take her obsession with cooking and cookery books to the next level. She enrolled in HTA School of Culinary Art and achieved a Professional Cookery qualification. She joined Southern Sun for two years, and then worked in hotels and restaurants in Johannesburg before starting and running her own company, Kirsten Jane Cakes and Confections in 2017. In January this year she joined Southern Sun Montecasino.



Press Release – Tsogo Sun Hotels – 04/06/2019

Challenges you've faced in the kitchen? I've only recently realised that I don't need to lose my feminine qualities to be respected as a chef. I love pink and sparkles and not afraid to say it. It's important to not lose who you are to fit in. Our kitchen is predominantly female and I encourage individuality.

Comfort food? Oozy dark chocolate fondant with pistachio ice cream.

Signature dish? At the moment it is oozy chocolate fondant, or fried egg on toast.

What do you love about being a chef? I love food. It's a great creative outlet and I enjoy the teamwork.

Marlene Makinson, Executive Chef, Vigour & Verve, Cape Town

Chef Marlene heads the kitchen at Tsogo Sun's newest hotels in the Mother City, SunSquare and StayEasy Cape Town City Bowl, where she is known to her team as 'Mama'. With over 20 years' experience in the industry, Marlene has worked her way up from a waitress to kitchen attendant, to Senior Chef de Partie and now Executive Chef. Falling in love with the industry when she was a waitress, her passion grew as she immersed herself in all aspects of the cooking and preparing of food.

What drives you? Making a difference that counts and developing team members to change their lives for the better not just at work but at home too. If you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life. Not many people can say that they absolutely love what they do as their career, but I am truly fortunate in that I really do.

Tsogo Sun Hotels has a portfolio of over 100 hotels throughout South Africa, Africa and the Seychelles. For more details, visit <https://www.tsogosun.com>, follow on Twitter @TsogoSun or like on Facebook @TsogoSun.