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STYLE



LIFE



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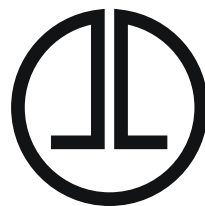
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MM.. FOOD

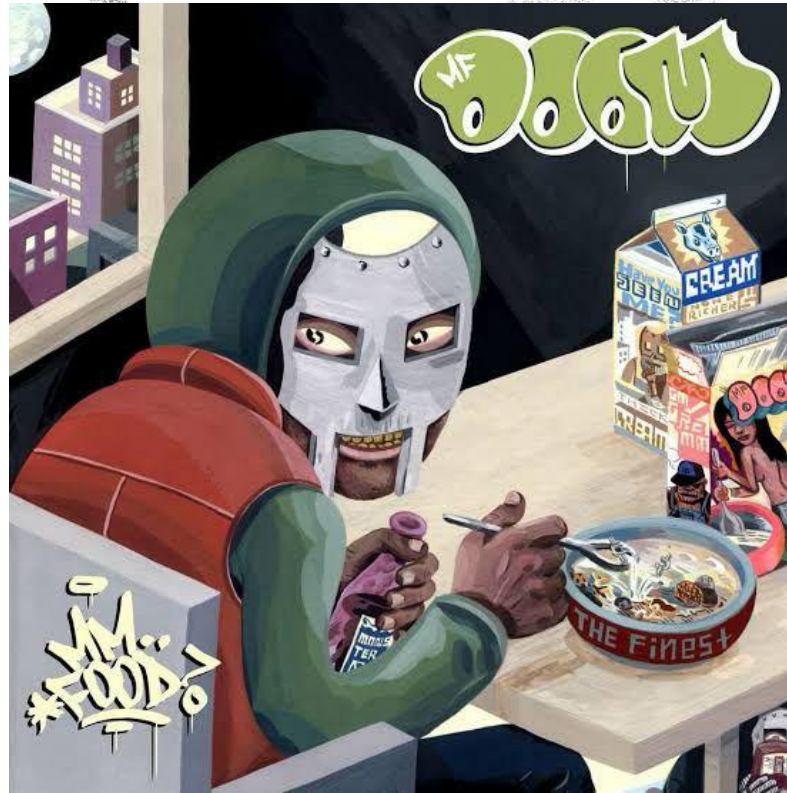
Friends, welcome to a bountiful and delectable issue of Life & Style.

The last dish that I ordered from He Sheng (a hidden gem of a Chinese Restaurant in Sea Point, Cape Town that we have featured on the cover of this magazine with an exceptionally stunning illustration from our friends at Studio Muti) was a hearty bowl of pickled cabbage and pig intestine soup that I shared with my mother and it was delicious. The dish was brought to our table by Shaun, one of the chefs and owners of the restaurant, and he served it with a pleasant and maybe slightly nervous smile (the kind that implied: "I really hope that these White people know what they've ordered and don't send it back to the kitchen."). Once the large bowl was left before us, we drew our faces closer to the soup's cloudy golden surface and let the wisps of steam wafting from it lick the tips of our noses.

Cooked intestines or tripe or Ulusu or whatever you would like to call it has a very particular smell that a lot of people can't stand. I certainly despised it as a child. Occasionally in my childhood, my father would cook tripe using an old pressure cooker with a red lid that he would utilise less like a cooking utensil and more like a bomb that he was trying to deactivate. After a few careful and calculated twists of the pressure valve that would hiss and spit at him like a jaded ex-lover until the whole situation calmed down, he would open the lid and the unmistakable scent would flood and overpower all of the air in the kitchen, much to my mother's dismay (which is probably why this particular meal was only seldom prepared in our house). My father didn't mind the smell. As a young child, he spent most of his time in the care of his family's caretaker and domestic worker Esther who would often prepare him the sorts of meals that she would prepare for her family which were probably the same sorts of meals that her mother prepared for her at one point. That is how Ulusu and pap earned a place of significance in the lore of my father's palette and, subsequently, mine as well. As I grew older, I came to welcome the scent with less resistance and with more of the warm recognition of meeting up with an old friend. I suppose that, in a way, this has also coincided with how I have become more understanding and receptive of the ways that my father expresses his love for me.



The smell of a well prepared tripe dish carries with it the care that my father showed for me which is also a continuation of the care that Esther showed for him. We eat food to fill our bellies and nourish our bodies but the way that that food is prepared and shared around a table is a means of articulating our care for one another. It is a language within itself that is passed down through families and within communities. When you are presented with the opportunity to partake in a meal that is specific to someone's culture or background, you are given an invitation to engage with the story of how this person has been loved and how they have learnt to show love. Perhaps by ingesting and digesting more of those stories and more of that knowledge, we ourselves can expand upon the vocabulary of our own care - simply by opening our hearts and, more specifically, our stomachs. Perhaps that is what Shaun felt when he collected the empty soup bowl from our table and smiled as we complimented him on such a wonderful meal. Or maybe he was just relieved that we liked it and didn't send it back to the kitchen.



The album MM.. FOOD by the late great rapper MF DOOM is, as the title would suggest, an album laden with food-related metaphors and sampled soundbites that serve to construct a nostalgic recreation of the DOOM's NYC home while also incorporating accounts of Black rhetorical traditions and communal advice for an imagined polysemic audience. The theme of the album may be food but the deeper flavours of the album address themes such as Black creativity, street politics, and loss. The food is simply the entry point into these topics, discussions and stories. Taking subtle inspiration from the album, this particularly food-orientated issue of Life & Style also aims to use food as an entry point to digging into deeper and more meaningful stories about the people preparing the meals in this magazine.

With that all being said, we hope that you enjoy this bountiful Spring issue of Life & Style and we hope that it appeals to your appetite.

Yours,

Dan Charles

Editor-In-Chief



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ON AIR, ONLINE & IN PRINT

Our publications, website and social media platforms have shaped opinion in the KZN North Coast region for the past twenty years creating a media brand that is credible, authoritative, and universally acclaimed.

Having expanded the platform ten years ago to include Ballito's only commercial radio station - **Radio Life & Style 88.0FM** that also streams digitally via free apps on every platform, we now own the local media scene.

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/ART /

MUTI

MUTI is a creative studio founded in 2011, based in the city of Cape Town, South Africa. We're a dedicated team of illustrators and designers who are passionate about producing original and inspiring artwork.

Below is a collection of artworks from our latest project, Midnight Rendezvous.

www.studiomuti.co.za





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Studio MUTI Design







BEAUTY, THE BELLY, AND THE BEAST

An introspective with Chef Neil Swart, co-founder of the Belly of the Beast

Words: Mia McCarthy

“I hate the term ‘fine dining’. It’s been bastardised,” says Chef Neil Swart, co-founder of the award-winning Belly of the Beast restaurant.

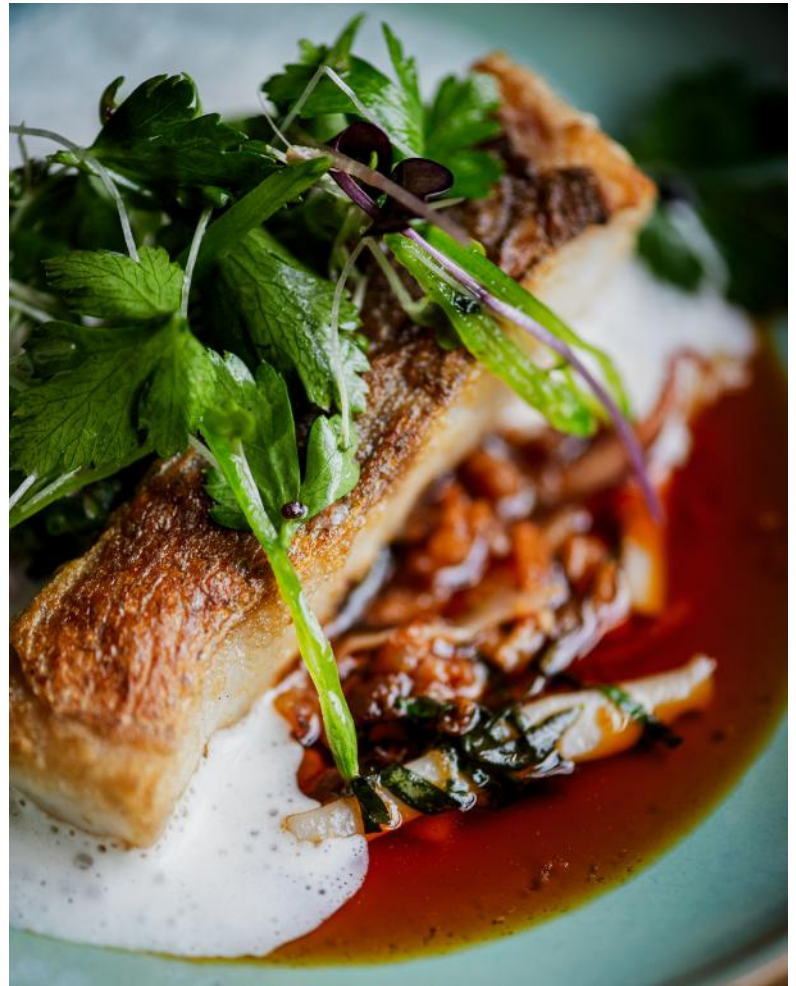
At first, Chef Swart’s take on fine dining seems to contradict the highly orchestrated machinations of his restaurant. The terms and conditions are clear: all twenty-six tables are served simultaneously. There are no menu options, save for select dietary requirements that must be communicated in advance. There is no set number of courses.

Nevertheless, when I walked into the softly-lit and immaculately clean restaurant for dinner service, these conditions didn’t feel like restrictions — they felt like respect. For Chef Swart, limiting your offerings to the dishes you excel at is good service.

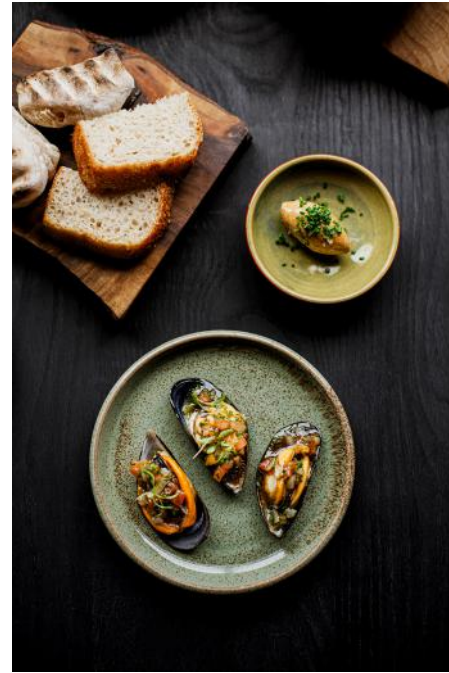
In a culinary era where decision fatigue is (literally) being driven by the hyper-availability of takeout and grocery delivery services, I think Chef Swart and his partner Chef Anouchka Horn are onto something. At Belly of the Beast, patrons are relieved of the burden of choice. And, if you select the wine pairing, you’ll have even less to consider. “You don’t have to make any decisions here,” says Chef Swart. “The food is thought out for you, the wine is thought out for you. Just sit down, enjoy it, and chat with your friends.”

This philosophy is clearly reflected in the style of service, too. Waiters glided gracefully between the kitchen and their tables with remarkable attention to detail, never leaving a drinking glass empty or letting a dinner fork go unreplaced. I didn’t miss a beat of the conversation I was having with my dining partner when she dropped her rolling papers, because they had scarcely hit the floor before they were wordlessly retrieved and replaced by a passing waiter.

That’s the kind of restaurant that Belly of the Beast is. They won’t tarry with people who request the dish without mushrooms, but they’ll ensure you won’t have to lift a finger for the entire duration of service. Again, it comes back to respect — for the patrons, but also for the ingredients and the kitchen staff.







From the dining area, the staff can be seen working efficiently and industriously in a small kitchen — the true belly of the beast. Anyone who has worked in the frontlines of the service industry will understand how apt the name of the restaurant is, but even fans of contemporary shows and films like FX's *The Bear* and Mark Mylod's *The Menu* will appreciate how savagely the industry can eat people up and spit them out. The express conditions laid out by the restaurant may appear peculiar to some patrons but, for me, they constituted a contract of engagement that only served to elevate my dining experience.

Chef Swart might baulk at the term “fine dining” because of its airs and graces, but that doesn’t mean that Belly of the Beast doesn’t deliver a unique eating experience. There is artistry to the dishes, but don’t expect anything as insubstantial as gels, foams, or sprays.

Every dish was exceptionally prepared — the smoked snoek starter, served with dill oil, dill pickles, and paper-thin sweet potato crisps was especially memorable — but it was the unanticipated elements of the menu that ended up being the most delightful for us. The beef tongue braai oepsie wrapped in Korean bacon and served with jalapeño mayonnaise, sriracha, pickled cucumbers, and dombolo dumplings was the most playful fusion dish I'd sampled in a long time. However, the breakout stars were the two breath mint-sized discs that were served alongside the meal. When bathed in warm water poured from a Japanese teapot, the discs bloomed into lemon-scented handtowels that we used to freshen up before the next course.

The next enchanting surprise was the palate cleanser, a burnt orange sorbet fizzing gently in marula-flavoured tonic water, rooibos sauce, and Tajin







seasoning. This little flavour grenade was expertly composed, but the element of surprise certainly contributed to our sense of rapture.

After dessert, we were presented with strawberry, cornflake, and white chocolate cookies with strawberry foam. Although I was physically seated at the top of Harrington Street with a glass of cinsault beside me, one bite into the cookie suddenly and powerfully transported me to my parents' kitchen in Highlands North, where my brothers and I would squabble over sips of strawberry Nesquik.

Local patrons are bound to encounter familiar ingredients at Belly of the Beast, but that doesn't mean that South Africans can't expect a novel dining experience. For us, it was the items that weren't advertised on the menu that created the strongest feelings of wonder, delight, and nostalgia. If you go to Belly of the Beast, you should go with an empty stomach and an open mind. Surrender to the experience and indulge in the luxury of a menu that has been painstakingly sourced, prepared, and refreshed once a month for your enjoyment.

If you've already dined in the Belly of the Beast, then you may wish to expand your culinary horizons further at its sister restaurant, Galjoen. Galjoen is about to share its mezzanine with the soon-to-be-opened Seebamboes, promising even more culinary pearls from the sea.

BELLY OF THE BEAST

@bellyofthebeast_ct
www.bellyofthebeast.co.za



A DREAM KITCHEN

EXOTIC KITCHENS

Reaching a milestone birthday is a significant event, and for many, it symbolizes a period of reflection, celebration, and looking forward to the next chapter of life. For Deline, her 50th birthday came with the ultimate surprise from her husband, Johan—a beautifully remodelled dream kitchen, an expression of love that spoke volumes about their years together.

THE PERFECT GIFT

When Johan began thinking about what to give his wife for her birthday, he knew he needed something truly special. So, to commemorate Deline's birthday he gave Deline a choice between an overseas holiday or a dream kitchen by Exotic Kitchens. The choice was made, and Johan commissioned Exotic Kitchens Sales Executive Samantha Moodley to turn this vision into a reality.

WHY EXOTIC KITCHENS?

Exotic Kitchens has built a reputation for creating one-of-a-kind spaces that blend style, functionality, and innovation. From sleek, modern designs to warm, rustic atmospheres, the company has been crafting extraordinary interiors for over 50 years. The team at Exotic Kitchens is known for bringing their clients' visions to life, and Johan knew they would be the perfect partners to help him create this meaningful gift.

CUSTOMISATION AT ITS FINEST

To build a home together with the person that you love is a marvellous union. Much like building a relationship itself, it does take a great deal of hard work and considerable patience at times, but the result is something beautiful that you share together and feel safe within. It is also an opportunity to tangibly actualise the kind of life that you and your beloved would like to inhabit together. The house, which at the time was filled with old wood, was transformed into a more open, modern space that was suitable for their lifestyle, including extended decks and practical flooring for their German Shepherds.

Deline, who has a taste for more contemporary design aesthetics, was looking to move away from the previous kitchen's traditional, closed-off layout. What sets Exotic Kitchens apart is their ability to customize every element of the kitchen, tailoring the design and functionality of the space to Deline's specific needs and desires.





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Samantha delivered a stunning solution that more than lived up to Exotic Kitchens' stellar reputation of bridging the gap between design, innovation, and expertise. The kitchen, anchored by a massive caesarstone island that provides ample prep space, is truly a sight to behold. The neutral colour palette of dark and light tones creates a cohesive flow between the kitchen and bar area. Thoughtful details like the recessed handles and custom-made black basin elevate the design. Everything about this kitchen encompasses the passion and dedication that the Exotic Kitchens team, who worked tirelessly through weekends and holidays to bring Johan and Deline's vision to life.

"It completely matched and exceeded our expectations," said Johan. "The quality and service received from Exotic Kitchens has been fantastic. Samantha and the installation team have been a dream to work with". Exotic Kitchens also renovated the couple's bar and built custom cabinetry throughout the home. The ability to seamlessly integrate the indoor and outdoor living spaces was another priority that was beautifully executed. "Samantha created this space for me, where the whole bar came out, and we said, 'Right, let's get a 100-inch TV on here, and a wall that's just for entertainment,'" Johan shared. "Now the bar flows onto the braai area, because when you're living so close to the sea, if you can't be outside, then that's not living."

The result of Johan and Deline's vision combined with the hard work and attention to detail from Samantha Moodley and her team from Exotic Kitchens has resulted in a beautiful space where the couple



can now share many delicious meals, a relaxing drink in the evening and an even more wonderful life together here on the North Coast. For others embarking on a kitchen or bar renovation, the homeowners' advice is to find a skilled designer who understands your lifestyle, uses durable materials that can withstand the elements, and build a strong, long-term relationship with your renovation team.

With the right approach, you too can create a dream space that is both beautiful and highly functional. Suffice to say, their advice for embarking on a luxurious kitchen renovation would be to work with Exotic Kitchens!

www.exotic-kitchens.com



AN ODE TO DUMPLINGS AND THE GRUMPY LADY

HeSheng Chinese Restaurant

Words: Dan Charles

Photographer: Sabina van Rooyen



This might be a bit embarrassing to admit but, almost every single time I have ever had to move into a new apartment, my mother has always insisted on flying all the way down from Ballito to Cape Town to help me pack up all of my things. To be clear, it is not her insistence that is embarrassing to me but rather my own sense of incompetence with regards to systematically assembling boxes and organising all of my possessions into them. Whenever I have attempted to undertake a move on my own, I have tended to approach them with the same sense of tact and strategy as the kids who scrambled to fit as many toys into their shopping trolleys as they could in under 60 seconds on the 1990's KTV show Reggie's Rush (by which I mean I would only haphazardly start packing my belongings about an hour before the moving van I had hired would be scheduled to arrive). As someone who is old enough to actually remember watching a show like Reggie's Rush while it was still airing, I am entirely aware that that is a borderline-lethal display of weaponised incompetence that I have inflicted on those who have offered to help me in those very dire moments - particularly my dear mother. Suffice to say, her caring insistence on assisting me is always received with humility and immense gratitude.

In my defence, there are some aspects of the packing process that I have proven to be more than proficient in - one most notably being picking a restaurant for a restorative meal to indulge in at the end of the day. A few years ago, after helping me with yet another particularly gruelling move, I took my mother out to an inconspicuous looking Chinese restaurant nestled within the heart of Sea Point where we had one of the most memorable meals of our lives - HeSheng. We sat down for an early dinner and were welcomed (though that might not be the right word) by the owner at the time, Meie, who had been busy hand-rolling an array of delicious-looking dumplings when we arrived.

I'm uncertain about the phrase "welcomed" because you could tell that Meie was the type of older Chinese woman who did not suffer fools lightly and ran this establishment tighter and with more precision than the dumplings she rolled.

With little to no pleasantries exchanged, she asked for - or rather commanded - our order and so my mother and I haphazardly rattled off our order with great haste, terrified of possibly being caught on the receiving end of this woman's potentially







Ling Bai





Erica Zhao



devastating disapproval by wasting her time. In our haste, we ended up accidentally ordering more food than two people alone could possibly ingest - the caveat of this accidental feast being the arrival of two very generously large portions of steamed dumplings that we blissfully gorged ourselves on before our entrees arrived. We did our best to eat as much as we possibly could and we damn near almost finished everything on our plates - which is a testament to both how delicious the food was and how much we did not want to possibly insult the restaurant's seemingly curmudgeonly owner - but, gosh, I have never been so full in my life! After we had paid and walked out of the door, my mother and I had to walk almost the entirety of Sea Point Main Road to aid the digestion of that banquet we had just consumed. It was a good, long walk on warm Spring evening and we spent it chatting and laughing about "the grumpy lady" and the whole ordeal. It was a delightful walk after a particularly wonderful meal.

I do not want to give you the wrong idea and lead you to believe that Meie's particularly blunt approach to restaurant hospitality was at all off-putting - if anything, it actually added to the charm of the whole evening. You could also tell that she really was not a mean-spirited person at all by the amount of care and tenderness that she put into the process of rolling the rows and rows and rows of Xiao Long Bao (soup dumplings) that you could witness if you arrived early enough.

Sometimes language itself fails us in expressing our love and care, sometimes it is more clearly felt in the ways that we best show up for each other - when helping someone move house or simply making a dinner reservation for someone perhaps. There is clearly an immense love and care in the way those dumplings are prepared. There is an immense love in preserving and honouring and then sharing one's heritage and traditions - a piece of one's self, really - with people who are, quite literally, hungry and eager to receive that love.

The new owners of HeSheng who took over from Meie after her 11 years of owning and operating the restaurant (she opted to retire once her daughter had given birth to her grandchild which, I think, is a very sweet thing to think about - the affectionately titled "grumpy lady" is now enjoying her life as a full-time granny!) are as committed to honouring and extending the now 20 year-long legacy of HeSheng and it's distinct offering of Northern Chinese cuisine - although their approach is a bit more personable than





Erica & Jacky Zhao & Shaun Sun

Meie's was. Speaking with Shaun Sun - who took over the restaurant last year with his business partner Jacky Zhao and their wives Ling Bai and Erica Zhou - he tells me that he wants to be friends with his customers: "I want to talk to them, to know them, and they get to know me as well."

Shaun used to eat at HeSheng 20 years ago when it first opened so he understands the significance of the restaurant's legacy. He also grew up in the same region of China as Meie did (the Liaoning province) so this style of cooking is as much a part of him as it was a part of her - it's his hometown flavour. However, despite his many years of working as a professional chef, this was his first time professionally engaging with the tastes and techniques of his heritage and so taking on this position was daunting to him.

"There's always a risk to take," he admits, reflecting on the transition from the previous owner to his own stewardship. "You never know if the people, the customers, will recognise you."

Today, I believe it is safe to say that Shaun's worries can be put to rest. Night after night, the restaurant continues to be flooded with patrons who are either local or from afar. In the year since he took over, Shaun and his team have not only continued to win over the restaurant's loyal patrons, but have also continued to attract a growing number of international patrons - particularly Chinese tourists seeking an authentic taste of their homeland. His unwavering commitment to quality, coupled with a genuine desire to foster a sense of community, has only deepened Hesheng's reputation as a beloved institution in the city of Cape Town. On any given night, you can find Shaun personally presenting table after table with steaming dishes of delicious food - treating each guest with as much care and gentleness as it takes to roll their famous dumpling - a task now passed on from Meie to Shaun and his partner's wives. And if you would care to know any more about any of the dishes being served, Shaun would be delighted to reciprocate that care in telling you all about them.

HESHENG

www.hesheng.co.za
021 433 0739



/ INTERIORS /



REFINED ENTERTAINMENT

By Stephanie du Preez

INTIMATE GATHERING OR GRAND AFFAIR? ENTERTAINING FAMILY AND FRIENDS IS A TIME TO SHARE SPECIAL MOMENTS AND CREATE DELICIOUS MEMORIES - SO ELEVATE YOUR DESIGN TO BRING SOPHISTICATION BACK TO CULINARY PURSUITS...

Food, glorious food! Whether you're the chef, or just there to enjoy what's on offer, make sure to inject oodles of elegance into your kitchen and dining schemes - this will keep your guests coming back for more!

Entertainment areas can be luxuriously stylish, comfortable and functional. OLALA INTERIORS masterfully turn entertainment areas into elegant and inviting spaces by carefully considering the functionality of the space, textures,

materials, cabinetry and furniture, lighting and, of course, the colour palette.

Employing the iconic trio of wood, metallics and marble in entertainment areas is genius. Wood brings in just the right amount of warmth, a touch of reflective metallics for the look of luxury, and gorgeous stone counter tops and splashbacks for practicality.

Creating the perfect ambiance and mood of the space can be successfully







Using gold detailing and bold highlights of colour, OLALA INTERIORS' made this kitchen a bright, elegant space. The smooth, glossy neutral cabinet doors work well with the contrasted wood details such as the kitchen island oak vertical strips.





achieved by incorporating the correct lighting elements - combine natural light, task lighting, and ambient lighting. Mix classics like chandeliers and oversized pendant lights to make a big statement, with LED strip lighting under cabinets or along kick boards to provide ambient and task lighting.

Utilising space correctly creates sophistication and poise. Demarcate spaces into versatile and multi-functional areas by adding an island or peninsular to physically separate the cooking area from the dining area. These can likewise provide practical, additional seating and workspace. Another design trick is to use rugs to zone areas, these will underpin the scheme and soften any hard flooring.

The heart of the dining room is undeniably the table and accompanying seating. Choose a table that makes a bold statement - a well-crafted one will be the centrepiece of the space. Pair with comfortable, luxurious chairs - a good looking chair doesn't need to compromise on comfort. Upholster in a tactile, plush fabric (think velvets, soft leathers and suedes) - this will definitely up the luxe factor.

Bespoke cabinetry - whether to house your wine or whiskey collection or to conceal appliances and provide storage solutions - contributes to a minimalist, modern aesthetic. Using materials such as stainless steel, glass, and glossy finishes guarantee a modern look.

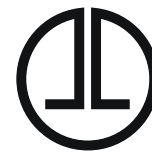




Oh so sleek! All OLALA INTERIORS' kitchens and dining areas are tailormade with bespoke cabinetry, perfectly proportioned furniture, fabulous statement lighting and a mix of classic and luxe materials.

Add glam with flowers (real or faux, but do go with good quality).





Luxury, sublime and subtle, or bold and fabulously over the top. This underpins the design style of the OLALA INTERIORS team. With over 30 years of good standing in the interior design world, OLALA INTERIORS celebrates crafting and curating interiors that radiate responsive, mindful design.

With meticulous attention to detail, an unrivaled luxury design expertise, and a unique approach to interiors, this award-winning team of designers and craftsmen create perfect habitats for discerning clients. Quality workmanship and luxurious finishes underscores each and every installation.

OLALA INTERIORS know the importance of authenticity and treat all projects in a unique way to develop their own personality, signature and style. Clients are assured of always receiving the very best service.



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INNOVATION + INTEGRITY



Deon Olivier

With the intersection of design and functionality remaining a critical element in modern architecture, North Shore Group (NSG) stands out as a trailblazer. Specialists in the design, manufacture, and installation of architectural aluminium and frameless glass systems, NSG has earned a reputation for turning creative visions into awe-inspiring realities.

AT THE HELM of this forward-thinking company is Deon Olivier, founder and CEO, whose entrepreneurial spirit and passion for excellence has driven NSG's success from its inception. Olivier, a hands-on leader with a sharp eye for detail, has built the company from the ground up, establishing it at the forefront of the industry by consistently delivering world-class products and services.

"Our philosophy is simple," Olivier shares. "We believe in pushing the boundaries of innovation while ensuring the highest standards of quality and craftsmanship. Whether it's a sleek frameless glass façade or custom architectural aluminium features, our goal is to provide solutions that not only meet but exceed our clients' expectations."

With a portfolio that spans residential, commercial, and high-end architectural projects, NSG's commitment to delivering cutting-edge products has made them the go-to choice for architects, developers, and homeowners alike. As an example of the company's latest innovation: Deon and his team have been hard at work designing and refining a new range of aluminium kitchen cupboards (both doors and internal framework) with sleek, modern profiles that promise to deliver a whole new level of aesthetics and durability — say goodbye to cupboards that swell or warp when exposed to water.



This kind of product development is made possible by NSG's investment in the latest aluminium and glass manufacturing machinery at their full-service facility located just outside Ballito. This base will soon have a sister on the other end of the country... The pull of business has been such that NSG is now poised to open a permanent Cape Town branch to meet the demand for its products and services in the Western Cape.

Word-of-mouth referrals from satisfied customers of all sizes continue to propel NSG's growth and reputation, attracting projects from across South Africa. "We've built this company on the strength of our relationships, honesty, and integrity," says Olivier. "We deliver on our promises." It's a recipe for success that will no doubt serve NSG well as it continues to expand and exceed expectations from coast to coast.

Visit www.nsgroup.co.za to find out more about NSG's world-class architectural glass & aluminium products and services.

THE BALLITO LIFESTYLE CENTRE

21 YEARS ON TREND

THE STORY OF the birth and growth of the Ballito Lifestyle Centre is as fascinating as that of Ballito itself. Since its opening 21 years ago, the centre's team has mirrored the community's rapid development and change. What began as a small convenience centre has arguably become the heartbeat of the North Coast and a key part of what makes Ballito such a unique and beautiful place to live. Co-owner and developer, Bruce Rencken, reflects on this incredible journey.

A BOLD DECISION

Like most great stories, it all began with a bold decision. Brothers Bruce and Paul Rencken, both seasoned in retail, followed in their father's footsteps, having been one of the founding members of SPAR South Africa. Initially, they planned to open a SUPERSPAR in a neighbourhood shopping centre in Ballito, but when the plans of the initial developers fell through, they decided to buy the land and build the centre themselves.

"We originally planned to be tenants, but when things didn't work out, we took the plunge and did the development ourselves," says Bruce. In 2003, the brothers opened the Ballito Lifestyle Centre, never imagining the incredible rollercoaster the next 21 years would bring.

PIVOTING WITH PURPOSE

Like the town itself, the Ballito Lifestyle Centre has grown in phases. From a humble 8,500m² convenience centre in 2003 to the current 30,000m² super-neighbourhood shopping centre, the centre evolved with the area's rapid expansion.

"We always knew the KZN North Coast was special, but we didn't anticipate how much it would grow. Back then, the site was a sugar cane field, and many thought we were crazy to take the risk," says Bruce. The relocation of Durban's international airport in 2010 accelerated growth, as did key local developments.

Despite the fast growth, it was not without challenges. In 2016, when the regional Ballito Junction Shopping Mall announced its expansion to 80,000m², Lifestyle Centre lost 60% of its tenants almost overnight. "It was

scary, and we didn't know if we'd survive. But instead of selling or turning it into a value centre, we shifted focus. We wanted Ballito Lifestyle Centre to be about human connection—a place where locals could relax and connect with family and friends," Bruce explains.

A PLACE TO MEET AND CONNECT

Determined to create a unique space that felt like a "home away from home," Bruce and his team carefully selected a tenant mix that embodied this vision. A key part of this transformation was The Market, a hub for local businesses. "We wanted local brands and individuals who shared our ethos," says Bruce. The decision to add communal seating in The Market was risky, but it has since become the centre's "heartbeat" and biggest success. Eat Street, with its al-fresco dining, live music, and welcoming atmosphere, further enhances the centre's appeal, with exciting additions like Waxy O'Connors Irish pub soon joining the fold.



Co-owner & developer,
Bruce Rencken



THE PERFECT RETAIL MIX

Lifestyle Centre is renowned for its blend of indoor and outdoor spaces, creating a street-scene shopping experience. The mix of retail tenants, including anchors like SUPERSPAR, Tops, Woolworths, BBS Mica, and Dis-Chem, ensures a diverse and enjoyable shopping experience. “We’ve been very strategic with our tenant mix to make sure the customer experience is fantastic,” says Bruce. From fashion boutiques like White Summer and Muze to upmarket brands like Freedom of Movement and Yuppiefchef, everything reflects their philosophy of “Life, The Ballito Way.” Bruce admits theirs is not a traditional business model but a highly operational and integrated one, where tenant relationships are key. “Respect and trust are vital,” he says.

THE NEXT GENERATION

As a father of three, Bruce remains optimistic about the future of Ballito and the North Coast. “Our kids have grown up here, and they all want to return and put down roots in Ballito. I’m confident that both my sons will eventually join the family business, continuing the tradition of Rencken shopkeepers,” he laughs. “No one could have predicted Ballito’s growth, and it’s an incredible place to live, from a business, lifestyle, and family perspective. It’s been a tough decade, but Ballito has stood firm as KZN’s premier coastal town, and I’m confident the next decade will be fantastic.”

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Lifestyle
THE BALLITO WAY



/ ESSENTIALS/

SUMMER, WITH BREAZIES

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“LIVE EASY” is our mantra. Breazies embodies the laid-back and timeless appeal of the coastal lifestyle that is Salt Rock. Offering a wide range of summer essentials, from their bright, bold swimwear for the whole family, quirky golf shirts and on to their classic linen range, they all have one thing in common, which is - you will slide right into a holiday mood when wearing anything from Breazies.

The business is owned and operated by husband-and-wife team, James and Kerry Greene who are locals in the Salt Rock community. Their driving force behind the brand's approach is a commitment to creating world class swim and lifestyle wear that evokes an “Easy Living” feeling that takes the edge off our increasingly busy lives and allows us to slow down and enjoy the moments that matter.



Breazies has you and the family covered with offerings that will elevate the memorable moment through your holiday season. For the beach, you'll find a vibrant range of meticulously crafted swimwear for men, women and kids. Then for off the beach, a timeless range of linen garments including quirky yet refined golf shirts for the course along with a range of other summer essentials.

This truly local brand has been serving up world class swimwear to South Africa and beyond since 2017 and has just launched their latest range, SS25. Make this summer your best and visit one of their of their flagship stores at the Lifestyle Centre, Ballito, The Old Biscuit Mill, Cape Town and newly opened store at the Hermanus Station Mall.

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SEEDS OF CHANGE IN OUR BACKYARD

Chef Mokgadi Itsweng's Indigenous Food Revolution

Words: Tara Boraine

Listen to this whilst reading: Plantasia by Mort Garson

On the days that I cannot stand or make myself food, my mother brings me my meals, along with a tidbit of knowledge. Sometimes it is a poem, sometimes something profound. That day, in particular, it was a fact. Did you know, last year was the year of millets?" She said, unprompted, as she walked into my dim sanatorium of a bedroom. "The what?" I laugh weakly.

"Yes! The UN declared last year the International Year of Millets!" she laughed back. "Now, eat up!" She handed me a steaming bowl of unassuming grain. I smelled olive oil, herbs. Pastoral, plain, and it had me drooling. I'd been in and out of hospital recovering from a flare-up of Long Covid. Two years of chronic illness had shrunk my world to the size of a duvet. My body was in revolt, rejecting nearly everything I tried to consume. But today, fortified by the idea of a gluten-free grain I could stomach, my appetite was back. And boy, was I hungry!

Imagine my surprise when, a few weeks later, a friend asked me to do a profile on the South African ambassador to said, "Year Of The Millets. The United Nations declared 2023 the International Year of Millets and focused their efforts to promote awareness of ancient grains nutritional benefits, climate resilience, as well as their potential to enhance food security. For we live in an era of nutritional paradox: a world of abundance where many still go to bed hungry. Might the solution to a sustainable future might just be growing in our own backyard?

This is the story of Chef Mokgadi Itsweng

Foodie, activist, and author of the plant-based cookbook "Veggielicious, Chef Mokgadi's culinary roots run deep. Women, in particular, played a foundational role. Her paternal grandmother was a subsistence farmer, growing indigenous vegetables that she then sold. As a child, Mokgadi joined her in the garden, harvesting pumpkins, ditloo and peanuts. Her maternal family included cooks and bakers, working hard in the hotel kitchens of tropical KZN. The township of Umlazi was known for its mango and guava trees.

Their scent hung sweet and heavy. Familial laughter filled the air. Perhaps this abundance is what inspired Kgadisco @ Mogkadis carefree alter ego who, rumour has it, dances joyously about the kitchen?

To understand the revolutionary nature of Chef Mokgadi's work, we must first look at the fragmented history of South African cuisine itself. I can think of no better way to do so, than through the lens of mielies. Corn. Maize. Umbila. Samp. Pap. Umngqusho. This alien crop was introduced in the 16th century by Dutch traders, by way of the Portuguese. It quickly usurped indigenous grains like sorghum and millet, reshaping the agricultural landscape and culinary traditions of the Southern tip of Africa.

Whilst this disruption is unfortunate, unfortunately this kind of alien invasion is nothing new. From ancient sieges to modern economic sanctions, the weaponisation of food systems has long been a tool in the arsenal of conquest & colony, shaping not just what people eat, but how they live, think, and think about themselves.

By the 20th century, the apartheid regime exploited this dependence, using maize as a tool of control. Amongst other policies, maize subsidies provided a surefire way of maintaining rural white support.

Over the years, the nutritional and cultural titans of millets, sorghums, amaranth, morogo, bambara groundnuts, and cowpeas were sidelined, denigrated, labeled as "poor man's food". Monoculture has come at a cost: decreased dietary diversity, increased rates of obesity and diabetes, and a concerning loss of indigenous food knowledge. There was a food security paradox. National food self-sufficiency coexisted with malnutrition, and lifestyle diseases. People were full. But they were not nourished. This paradox of plenty amidst scarcity is a symptom of a deeper societal malaise, of rusty cogs and broken systems, disconnected from the land, from our food, and from each other.

It's against this starchy backdrop that Chef Mokgadi's work takes on revolutionary significance. Before maize's reign, there were the ancient grains.





Domesticated over 5,000 years ago, sorghum and millet perfectly adapted to our arid climates and ascetic soils.

As well as being nutritional powerhouses, sorghums and millets were at one point inextricably woven into the fabrics of African life. They've starred in creation myths, featured in ceremony, and even played a role in early state formation. And this next season might just feature them in a leading role. As I delved deeper into Chef Mokgadi's work, particularly her focus on plant-based meals, I couldn't help but reflect on my own fractured culinary heritage. I have always loved fresh, vibrant, plant-based food. Being half English, and half Afrikaans, I too have witnessed the colonial hangover of our signature wors-n-aartappels carnivorousism. You can imagine the many times I have been the lone vegetarian at a braai, with some oke waving a tjop in my face.

Our current meat-centred traditions are a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and socio-economic factors, too numerous to go into now. To give you a current picture, South Africans across cultures eat twice the amount of meat and three times less of vegetables than recommended by nutritionists. The perpetuation of this culture is complex, too. In a country where 13.8 million people are experiencing food poverty, meat consumption symbolises the ability to afford it. But given the looming climate crisis begs the question: can we afford to carry on farming livestock at all?

The good news is, even if our diets change drastically, you don't worry about missing meat.

With Chef Mokgadi in the kitchen, traditional plant-based ingredients undergo a mesmerizing metamorphosis. Her Dikgobe risotto, for instance, swaps the classic Italian Arborio rice for this sorghum & cowpeas, imparting a wonderful, nutty flavour that lends itself beautifully to the creamy texture of dish. Topped with chimichurri sauce?? Fusion at its finest. Another standout is her millet. Often used in place of couscous, she has a knack for transforming the tiny grain into a light, fluffy base rivaling its North African namesake.

Perhaps my favourite of Chef Mogkadi's culinary innovations is her use of imphepho (*Helichrysum odoratissimum*) to smoke vegetables. With the Latin name giving away its olfactory delights, this ubiquitous yet sacred ceremonial herb adds a flavour that compliments cauliflower so well it is, quite literally, food for the soul.

And Chef Mokgadi isn't alone in this delicious revolution. Across South Africa, a network of food activists is working to transform our food system from the ground up.

Zayaan Khan, an indigenous food revivalist and seed activist, is preserving not just our food heritage, but the very building blocks of our food system.

Loubie Rusch, founder of "Making KOS," is reintroducing indigenous edible plants, creating new opportunities rooted in our botanical heritage.

As I sit here finishing up writing this piece, fingers sticky from savouring my late-night snack of sorghum pancakes, I'm struck by how far down the rabbit hole this journey has taken me. What began as a serendipitous search for foods that agreed with my picky stomach has blossomed into a profound appreciation for the inspiring potential of our indigenous, proudly Southern African ingredients.

As this ancient wisdom resurfaces, I encourage us to bravely explore our own culinary backyard. Ditch the quinoa for some millet, the mielies for some mabele. Perfume your kitchen with imphepho. Visit an urban garden. Support your local small-scale farmers. Shop where you have never shopped before.

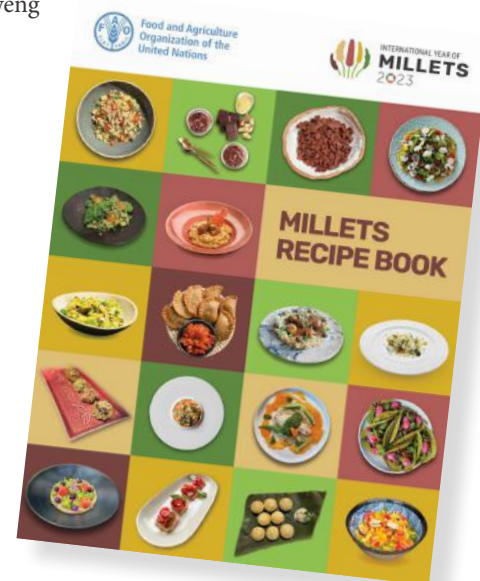
In connecting with your food system, you connect with your culinary heritage, and the heritage of your fellow South Africans.

In the words of Mogkadi Itsweng, "Our food is our story." So, what story will your next meal tell?

MARIA M ITSWENG

A plant-based & indigenous food chef, author of veggielicious cookbook, foodxx award 2021 gourmand award winner 2023, treehugger, storyteller.

@chefmokgadi_itsweng



NORTH COASTAL ELITE

THE WOMEN RUNNING KZN

TO CELEBRATE WOMEN IN BUSINESS we invited many of our local North Coast business luminaries to share their stories with our listeners on Radio Life & Style and their stories proved to be so interesting that we decided to carry the feature over to pages of Life & Style. In this edition we introduce you to some of the women who are helping to turn the KZN North Coast local economy into a veritable powerhouse.



To listen to the interviews
scan & go to podcasts

Veronica O'dwyer Director of Wiesinger O'Dwyer INC

A litigation expert, Veronica has lived and worked on the Dolphin Coast for over 30 years. After earning her BA and HDip Ed. from Cork University, Ireland, she joined the Ireland-Lesotho Aid Programme in 1980, experiencing life outside her comfort zone in rural Lesotho. She later moved to South Africa, completing her LL.B at Pietermaritzburg University in 1985. Veronica gained experience in the insurance industry and as a State Prosecutor before moving into private practice. She served articles with attorney Praveen Sham, a former president of the Law Societies of South Africa, and later practiced for 12 years at the historical North Coast firm Laurie C Smith Inc. She continued her practice in Ballito from 2001 to 2007 before joining conveyancers Louis Wiesinger and Herbert Schulz.



• What was the defining moment in your life that shaped your career into what it is today?

There was no one defining moment. However, my lifelong sense of justice and belief that education is the ultimate liberator, especially as it applies to women, has really been an influence.

I was fortunate to have a great education both in Ireland and here. This foundation instilled in me a strong view that providing women with a good education and life skills gives them a choice in their lives, enabling them to forge their own destiny. Likewise, in the legal profession, knowledge and empowerment are very important to me. My two professional qualifications as a Teacher and an Attorney have undoubtedly helped me to forge my own destiny and I would like to think that I have helped others to forge theirs.

• How do you stay motivated and inspired in your work especially during difficult times?

The last four years in KwaZulu-Natal have been particularly challenging. My practice supports 14 people, 12 of whom are women. I must focus on what is important, be strong and determined in the face of adversity so that we remain relevant, service and goal driven and, obviously, economical. The fact that I love my work and that it gives me the scope to inspire others, obviously helps. I would like to think that I have instilled a strong work ethic, sense of self-worth, discipline and integrity in those whom I have taught, mentored and employed and that outside work, I was a good mum and provided our children with a great sense of love, security and, of course the above attributes.

Yael Geffen

Ceo & Shareholder Of Sotheby's International Realty, South Africa

Yael Geffen is the CEO and a shareholder of Lew Geffen Sotheby's International Realty and serves on the Europe, Middle East, India, and Africa regional task force for Sotheby's International Realty. A sought-after keynote and TEDx speaker, Yael is also a mental health advocate and life and business strategy advisor. Over the years, she has won several prestigious awards, including Standard Bank's Top Woman in Property Award (2020) and CEO of the Year at the Women of Stature Awards (2023). She was also recognized as one of the Top 30 Trailblazers at the Strategic African Women in Leadership #SAWILVision2030 Awards.

- **Can you share a challenge you faced as a woman in your industry and how you overcame it?**

My industry used to be very male dominated. My Grandmother Aida and Pam Golding were leaders back in the day – and when they retired, men dominated. When I took over at our company, I was not only a woman in a male dominated industry but the youngest. I thought I should attempt to fit in and wear ties – but I realised that this was a crazy idea. I looked like a schmuck! I decided to turn my filters into foundations and worked on myself from the inside out to become the leader I wanted to be.



- **In a sentence, what legacy do you hope to leave behind, both professionally and personally?**

It's about being authentic and leading by authenticity. I want to inspire people and make a mark – and leave the world a little bit more resilient. I would like to see a universe that has fewer fake people – by being you, you can be fantastic.



Tash Barnard is a passionate Pilates instructor, educator, mentor, and business leader. After pursuing her dream of dance, she discovered the world of Pilates through BASI, where she is now a principal instructor and faculty member. Tash is a proud ambassador of this pure form of Pilates and has had the privilege of teaching internationally, including contributing to Pilates Anytime. At her core, Tash B aims to inspire people to maintain not only great posture but also uprightness within their hearts.



Tash Barnard

Owner/ Basi Principal
Instructor Of Tash B Pilates

- **What was a defining moment in your life that shaped your career into what it is today?**

2014 teaching on my first Pilates retreat in Bali Indonesia I felt a strong conviction that God would use me to build His Kingdom wherever He sends me. This has been my reality ever since.

- **How do you stay motivated and inspired in your work, especially during difficult times?**

Poor leadership is the biggest struggle in any industry - I have overcome this by being front footed, clear with expectations and being confident in the value I bring. I am driven by setting values which guide my decision making - people first. My husband leads me well and supports me in everything. We understand the importance of team.

- **In a sentence, what legacy do you hope to leave behind, both professionally and personally?**

A legacy of coming alongside people to help them trust their bodies that have been designed to move towards wholeness and strength.



Anneme Coetzee - Nlp Master Trainer

Anneme holds an international Master Trainer qualification in Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) from the prestigious American Board of NLP, complemented by certifications in Life Coaching, Hypnosis, a Degree in Metaphysics, and initiation in Ancient Huna Methodology. She has received numerous accolades for her contributions to NLP, including the African Excellence Awards as a Leading Expert in NLP Coaching (2021, 2024) and the Corporate Vision Awards for Best NLP Coaching Company in South Africa (2022–2024). Anneme is known for her innovative techniques, integrating traditional NLP wisdom with modern neuroscience and epigenetics, creating deeply transformative programs.

- **What was a defining moment in your life that shaped your career into what it is today?**

The curiosity of human behaviour started with my own colourful story. There's not one specific defining moment but a series of challenges, like being exposed to abusive people. I wanted to find out why people do what they do. In my career it was about getting to know people and finding out what makes them tick.

- **Can you share a challenge you faced as a woman in your industry and how you overcame it?**

My industry was mostly male dominated. About 80% of Master Trainers were men when I came into the industry. Right now, I'm the first, and (at present), the only South African born female Master Trainer in Africa accredited with the American Board of NLP. I didn't really pay attention to the male dominating factor. What has stood out for me is that women are allowed to express themselves in ways that men can't. You notice today how women in top positions manage to handle conflict much better than men because of that emotional connection they have with people.



Hantie Plomp - Founder Of Triplo4 Sustainable Solutions

With thirty years of experience in environmental and sustainability management, Hantie Plomp holds a Master's Degree in Environmental Management (Cum Laude), a BSc in Microbiology and Physiology, a National Diploma in Analytical Chemistry, and a Certificate in Business Management. Her career began in the mining industry, where she developed environmental training programs, audited compliance, and created action plans for improved sustainability. In 2011, she founded Triplo4 Sustainable Solutions, providing consultancy services to both the public and private sectors. Her company specializes in resolving environmental challenges and improving sustainability practices.

- **Can you share a challenge you faced as a woman in your industry and how you overcame it?**

When I joined the environmental team, environmental management was largely unknown, and we were referred to as "bunny huggers". I was told by a Senior Operations Manager that he thought I was just a dollybird running around, doing some fluffy awareness.

I overcome the challenges by really getting to know my world and my clients' world. I focus on understanding their needs and finding solutions to their problems and in doing so, to consider the environment as well as the social and economic implications to the operations. If you can find solutions that are time and cost effective, then appreciation grows, and you are seen as a professional woman. In addition – learning to grow a thicker skin and not taking everything personally. Often, people are frustrated and upset with their circumstances and the situation they are facing, and it is important to focus on the issues that you can solve.

- **How do you stay motivated and inspired in your work, especially during difficult times?**

Difficult times are a given as part of managing a business. Consulting probably adds another layer of challenges to that. But, when you have found your purpose and passion in life, you will still enjoy the journey. In my free time, I love building puzzles, which helps me to relax.



Zandri Cirinna
Managing Director Of Resionex

Zandri Cirinna, known as Zee, is the Managing Director of Resionex Consulting, where she oversees the preparation, implementation, and maintenance of clients' B-BBEE strategies. With a decade of industry experience, she drives transformation in the private sector through sustainable initiatives.

Zee founded Resionex Consulting in 2019, starting with just three clients and a second-hand laptop. Her dedication and culturally rich background have helped the firm grow into a successful consulting business with a diverse clientele, including multinational and listed companies.

She holds an MDP in B-BBEE from WITS University and is a long-term student at the School of Philosophy. Her ability to connect with clients on a personal level has been key to the successful implementation of numerous initiatives.

Zee is also deeply involved in community relief efforts, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, which provides a peaceful balance to her professional life.

• **What was a defining moment in your life that shaped your career into what it is today?**

I found myself stuck in a sales role at a corporate, selling people goods and services they did not need. I had no purpose other than to survive each month. I started being reprimanded weekly for offering clients advice that would save them money, but it often meant that I would not get the sale. But I felt better about me as a person. I had to undergo a Personal Values Alignment in a role and organization that did not align with my personal values, and I realised, could never lead to greater job satisfaction or motivation. So essentially, I was not happy with my environment, so I decided to change it.

• **Can you share a challenge you faced as a woman in your industry and how you overcame it?**

Being underestimated is a daily challenge if you choose to see it as such. Personally, I love being judged by my cover and underestimated. Those are my favourite kind of meetings!



Patricia Schroeder
CEO Of Circular Energy

Patricia is a Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) for waste from electronic and electrical equipment on a national scale. Her passion for the environment, which began at an early age, grew throughout her career. She holds an MBA, a BSc in Chemical Engineering, and a Master's Degree in Environmental Management. Patricia is a Chartered Environmental Manager with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Managers (London) and a Certified Director® with the Institute of Directors of Southern Africa. Over her 30-year career, she has founded several award-winning SMMs in the environmental services sector. She has received numerous awards, including the Fairlady SANTAM Woman of the Future Award (2018) and the Eco-Logic Awards for Recycling and Waste Management (2019).

Glenda Thompson

Chartered Public Relations Consultant (PRISA)

Founder and CEO of the PR consultancy Get U Noticed, Glenda Thompson has been in the public relations and communications industry for over thirty years. She has worked as a PR specialist, freelance journalist, and editor of several publications across Southern Africa. Seventeen years ago, she founded Get U Noticed, which specializes in telling clients' stories. She has represented many prominent clients, including appliance and electronics retailer Hirsch's, since the company's inception. With a focus on the future and environmental sustainability, she now also represents eco-conscious clients like Hantie Plomp from Triplo4 Sustainable Solutions and Patricia Schroder from Circular Energy.

- **What was a defining moment in your life that shaped your career into what it is today?**

The defining moment for me was understanding the importance of telling a story. People love a story and there is no better way to get a product or brand or a person out there than by telling the story. It probably started from a very early age. I've always loved stories and now I just love telling them.

- **In a sentence, what legacy do you hope to leave behind, both professionally and personally?**

I hope to leave behind the legacy of finding humour in any situation - the importance of laughter, kindness and gratitude.

- **Do you have a favourite comfort meal that you like to treat yourself to after a particularly difficult or rewarding day?**

Smoked trout, my home-grown rocket and cherry tomatoes with a cream cheese and garlic dressing.



Chantel Saadi

Ceo Of Sandstone Story



Chantel El Saadi is the Managing Director of The Sandstone Story, a leading supplier of natural stone products. With over a decade of experience in FMCG as an analyst, she excels at using data to drive business decisions and has managed multimillion-dollar budgets and stock forecasting.

Her strategic insights and collaborative approach have played a key role in the company's growth. Known for identifying business opportunities and focusing on effective solutions, Chantel is dedicated to maximizing potential and ensuring long-term success.

Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with her family, running, and cycling, reflecting her values of balance and well-being. Chantel remains committed to expanding The Sandstone Story and making a lasting impact in the natural stone industry.

- **What was a defining moment in your life that shaped your career into what it is today?**

A defining moment was when I took on a challenging project early in my career, proving to myself that I could lead and succeed in high-pressure situations.

- **How do you stay motivated and inspired in your work, especially during difficult times?**

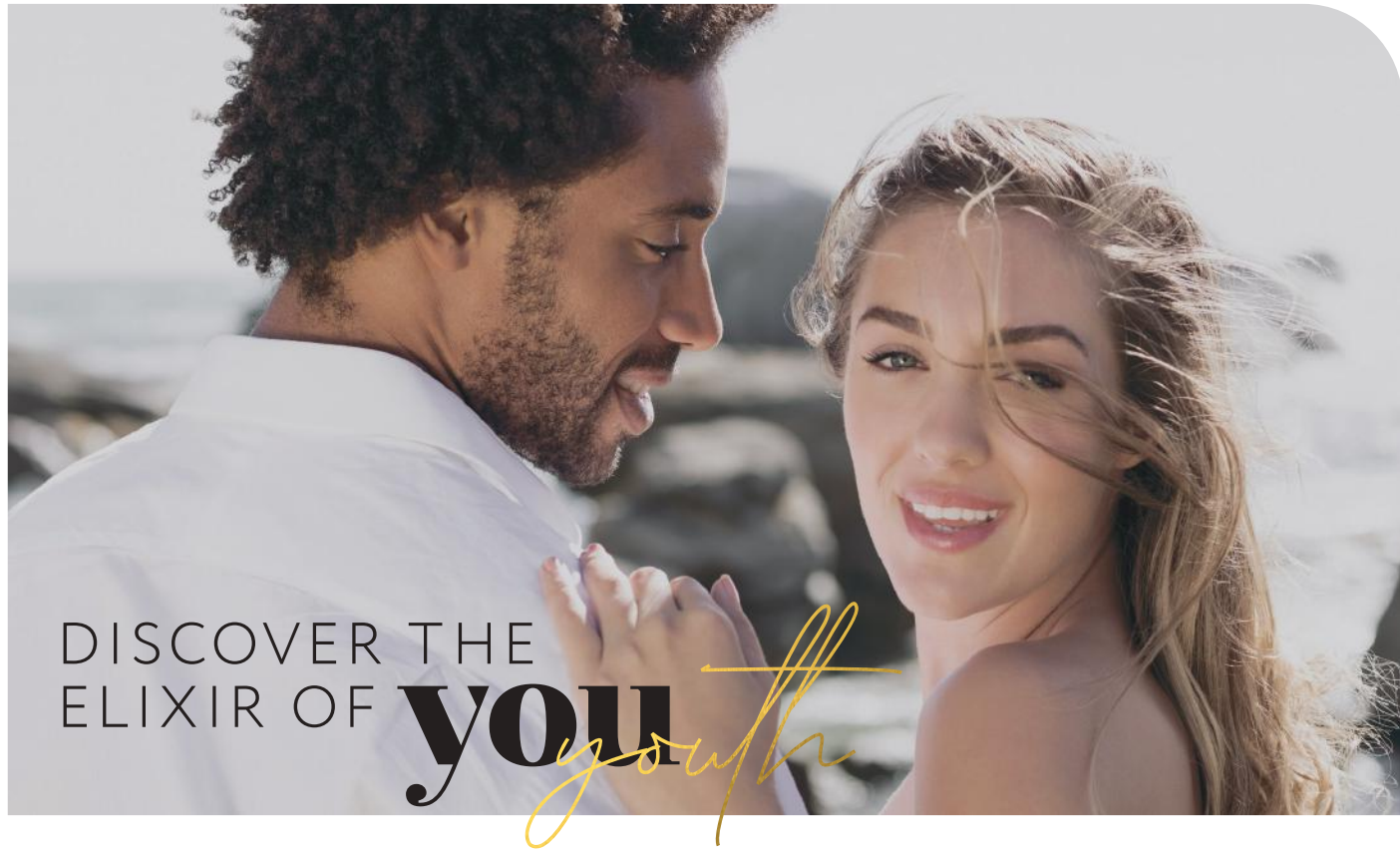
I stay motivated by focusing on my passion for the work and remembering the impact it has on others, especially during tough times.

- **Do you have a favourite comfort meal that you like to treat yourself to after a particularly difficult or rewarding day?**

My favourite comfort meal is a warm, homemade pasta dish that I enjoy after a challenging or successful day.



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WHAT I LEARNED WHEN I LEARNED TO COOK

Words: Shannon Devy

FOR MANY YEARS, I refused to learn to cook. To me, cooking appeared time-consuming, dreadfully boring, and prone to producing dirty dishes. For years I subsisted entirely on Woolies meals, Nando's wraps, coffee shop fare, and the kindness of others. My approach to cooking was dating people who cooked, and this was a surprising successful survival strategy. I was an expert at washing up but, when it came to the operation of stoves and knives, I felt strongly that such dangerous activities were really none of my business. By the age of 36, my culinary skills extended no further than the occasional toasted cheese sandwich, and I was getting along just fine. That is, until I met Mia.

While I was always careful to select partners who cooked, Mia was in a league of her own. A deeply talented cook, Mia had spent lockdown in her digs kitchen teaching herself the dark arts of slow-roasted tomato sauce and delicately browned butter, ceviche and butter-fried celery. By the time we started dating, she had a formidable arsenal of simply exceptional dishes at her disposal, making dinner at hers an absolute joy.

For the first two years of our relationship, Mia cooked. We moved in together. I tackled the dishes, the driving, and a large share of the cleaning. Mia cooked and cooked. Night after night, she placed before me one outstanding dish after the next. From rich, cheesy parmigianas to buttery butternut pastas, to hearty,

nourishing chicken soups, she cooked with such care and inspiration, I knew I couldn't possibly compete. Why try? I'd hit the jackpot. My plan had come together perfectly. I would never need to know how to peel a potato or chop an onion. I was destined for a life of luxury, and Mia would never wash another dish. Fair deal, right? Not really.

You see, what I had failed to factor in was the fact that cooking begins long before the click of the gas burner. The mental load of planning and executing a relentless parade of nutritiously balanced dinners while managing the budget, the pantry and the fridge takes its toll, and after two years of grace, Mia gently informed me that it was, in fact, time. I needed to conquer the kitchen, and she had a plan to help me get there.

The next week, Mia signed us up for uCook, a meal subscription service that delivered the ingredients and recipes for three lovely meals straight to the front door every Monday. This way, I wouldn't have to worry about the intricacies of meal planning to start, and I could focus on getting comfortable with the basics. Under Mia's expert eye, I got to work. I peeled and chopped and fried and roasted. I learned how to cut an onion, boil a potato, and manage heat. With infinite patience, Mia showed me how to salt in stages to maximize flavour. She answered my questions, and helped fix my terrible sauces. And as I got more comfortable and the initial stress of being responsible for dinner abated, I started to notice something remarkable – I was enjoying myself.

The disasters were frequent. I remember once, after misunderstanding the drained versus net weight indications on a can of tinned tomatoes, I added 1.5 litres of puree to a spaghetti bolognese. The result was nothing short of canteen slop – entirely inedible. After poor Mia tried to drain her spaghetti over the sink, I thought it best to order Uber Eats. But I also remember the first dish I absolutely nailed: pork fillet with an almond brown butter sauce. I remember the look on Mia's face when she took her first bite, and I remember understanding, in that moment, what cooking really meant: that carefully preparing delicious, nourishing meals is a powerful way to care for yourself, and for those you love. It's a way to make life more beautiful and more enjoyable – a quiet, meaningful way to show love. That's what Mia was showing me with all the effort, skill, talent and time she put into meal after meal, year after year. That's what I hope to show her and others as I continue to learn and try and fail in our little kitchen.

I still haven't cracked the spaghetti bolognese. But I'm going to keep trying. &



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Each year, the North Coast community eagerly anticipates the Fair's showcase of unique, handcrafted items. But this event is far more than just a shopping opportunity—it's a celebration of local creativity, where artisans, trendsetters, and innovators come together to inspire and collaborate.

In addition to browsing a super selection of products, visitors can look forward to exciting activities like creative workshops, live entertainment, and the chance to spend a fun-filled day with family and friends. The Fair is a feast for the senses, with something for everyone, all in support of a great cause.

The event operates as a cashless fair, with Zapper and card payment options available for ease and convenience. All funds raised go directly to the Christmas Fair Fund, a nonprofit organization that supports sustainable initiatives in the North Coast region. With a strong focus on education, medical assistance, and individual support, the Fund has been a beacon of hope for many in the community.

With its focus on community, creativity, and charity, The Christmas Fair is more than just an event—it's an opportunity to give back while enjoying a memorable experience. So, mark your calendars, grab your tickets online, and get ready for a day filled with festive fun.

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For more details and tickets visit: www.fairwithflair.co.za

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THE SUGAR RUSH

The forgotten story of how 'White Gold' built the plantation fantasies of Royal Natal

Words: Cameron Luke Peters

**“Alas, poor Durbanites, which will you choose,
Which of the dread alternatives refuse,
This is the ultimatum that you shirk,
The awful question - Poverty or Work?”**

From 'The Wayzgoose' by Roy Campbell

The truth is that Durban was born in Mauritius. It's important that we get this right considering how many ex-pats are presently celebrating the city's bicentennial birthday. In my eyes, eThekweni did not start in 1824, when Francis Farewell and Henry Francis Fynn got the first permanent lease on the 'Englishman's Inn' from King Shaka. And neither did it first sprout in 1835, when 35 white traders got together by the Point to set out a town-plan and name it fawningly after the British governor in the Cape (who hardly seemed to notice). And it definitely wasn't born in May-June 1842 when Dick King rode a horse 600 kilometres through the Wild Coast to Makhanda in just over a week to save the city from becoming Afrikaans.

Instead, I'd bet that Durban was born on the 25th of April, 1855, when a whiny settler in Tongaat named J.R. Saunders wrote in to The Natal Mercury (as it was then) to argue that if white farmers didn't want to work their sugarcane fields themselves, they should just copy Ile de Maurice. The British navy had previously snatched the little Dodo depot from Napoleon back in 1810, and later decided to keep it. After banning old-fashioned slavery (mostly of Malagasy people) through the 1830's, the British planters quickly replaced it with a more progressive form of the practice. Over the rest of the century, half a million low-caste South Indian labourers were brought to the island on fixed contracts to plant, cut and harvest the crop that came to symbolise the frontier of luxury in modern

Europe. The founders of 'the last outpost of the British Empire' would soon take copious notes.

I'm sure you vaguely knew some of this already though? Most of the South African diaspora, when asked why there are more Indian people in KZN than anywhere else in the world outside of the subcontinent (or why Gandhi got his start here causing Jan Smuts headaches for decades), can probably answer that they were brought as indentured workers to serve the sugar industry. Most of us banana-boys went on at least one primary-school outing to a cane-field where we got to cut the leaves and suck on the raw stems to taste the un-



processed tang. My Mum and Dad both grew up in Yellowwood Park and when I visited my Nana there, we'd have to drive past the Hulett's terminals which curved like brutalist cathedrals beside Maydon Wharf. But at the same time, there's something missing in our consciousness. The Western Cape is synonymous with wine and fruit. Johannesburg has been tethered to the price of gold in the public imagination since its founding. But the association between Durban and sugar has grown just a little more ambiguous. To be honest, I'm not exactly sure why.

My best theory is that sugar is a little shameful - in ways that wine and gold, for some reason, are not. The enduring evil embedded in Haiti, Jamaica, Brazil, Fiji and many other hotspots lingers on in our collective memories from a more brazen era of liberal capitalism. The fact that Natal prospered as a hands-on sugar colony well into the 20th-Century reminds me of the nature of Apartheid itself; it was a throw-back system - a modernised version of an antique structure of power that only survived elsewhere by being a whole lot more subtle. Today, the issue is that white South Africans are just as much the 'children of sugarcane' as Indian-South Africans. We are what we ate.







As James Walvin writes a propos the Caribbean: “[This history is] present, of course, in the simple pleasures of a sweet cup of tea or coffee in the humblest of homes. The fruits of slave labour [so] thoroughly permeated the Western world, and [became] so entangled in the social and physical fabric of Western life that it [is] hard even to notice it.”

However, it could have been a totally different ingredient. The Victorian historian John Robert Seeley famously wrote at the height of the Pax Britannica, “[W]e seem, as it were, to have conquered half the world in a fit of absence of mind.” This went doubly for Durban. Still today, historians give different reasons for the British annexing Natal. Some claim they wanted to keep the Voortrekkers landlocked, some that they wanted to protect the Cape Colony and the Zulu people (how ironic) and some that they just liked the look of the place. Regardless, as the New History of South Africa puts it: “[In 1847] Natal [was] colonised on paper before it was colonised on the ground” when two million acres were put on the open market by the Cape Governor willy-nilly, leaving it as a “colony in search of a reason for its existence.”

The first reason - the first ‘white gold’ - was ivory, with a pretty constant stream of elephant tusks flowing out of Port Natal. But one after another, different settlers gambled fortunes on different crops. For a while, cotton looked like the ticket, even inspiring a Jewish entrepreneur named Jonas Bergtheil to ship hundreds of Hanoverian peasants to Pinetown to start a plantation called New Germany. But the books wouldn’t balance. Others tried pistachios, turmeric, ginger, arrowroot, indigo and pawpaw from Brazil. Nothing would take. What about coffee, surely? Many of the beautiful art deco blocks and Edwardian mansions on the Berea (where I grew up)

are indeed built on the site of former coffee plantations, originally sewn with beans brought from Mauritius. By the 1870’s these farms were exporting 500 tons a year! But the crop was doomed by the Tobacco mosaic virus and would take a century to recover. Sugar it would have to be.

Another Jewish settler, the famous friend and chronicler of King Shaka, Nathanael Isaacs, had already noticed in the 1820’s that a local variety of cane called iMpha grew like weeds and that the denizens of Zululand loved to chew on it. But the father of African sugar as we know it is a completely forgotten person: Edmund Morewood. (Some sources call him ‘Edward’). He was a well-liked customs official who jumped on the cotton rush and became the manager of a company farm near Umdloti. Many of his neighbours were expat Mauritians who missed their old tenures and dreamed of recreating the *douce vie* in La Mercy. As T.V. Bulpin narrates: “[I]n September 1847 the Durban firm of Messrs Milner Brothers, who maintained a trade with Mauritius, made a trial importation of a cargo of seeds and shoots of various Mauritian and Reunion Island crops. Included in the cargo were 40,000 tops of an inferior variety of sugar cane, known as Mauritian Red Cane” which were auctioned off to dozens of gamblers. The next year, a wonderfully-named Mauritian, Ephraim Frederick Rathbone, arrived to inspect the payout.

He soon struck up a collegial friendship with Morewood and convinced him to convince his company to give up five acres of land to grow these cane tops. The company, ultimately, was not impressed. Morewood soon left their employ and asked the colonial government to grant him farmland with which to continue his experiment. They gave him exactly the land he didn’t want, near Tongaat. In response, he named his farm ‘Compensation’. Here he frittered away nearly all his life savings and designed and built a water-driven sugar mill by hand from scratch.



His eventual output was tiny, but it was the first good crop in the entire country. As Bulpin writes, “[t]his success set many hearts beating at a faster rate. [...] Innumerable visitors journeyed up the north coast to the [farm], to view the beginnings of Natal’s sugar industry.” Ironically, this did not help Morewood at all: he was a messy, reclusive genius who could hardly afford to host anyone, and when, in 1852, he failed to raise enough capital or convince speculators to dig for coal on his estate, he was forced to sell everything and leave. In a great twist of fate, his memory was only saved by his unworthy heirs. In 1948, the Hulett family uncovered the ruins of his mill and built a memorial garden to him decorated with indigenous plants and a small millpond. All that is left of Morewood’s work today is a “foundation of crude, sun-dried bricks.”

For the rest of the settlers, however, it was off to the races. There were endless obstacles to hitting paydirt - just as Durban itself was an unlikely metropolis built on mangrove swamps. Transport infrastructure was still non-existent. Floods drowned several early plantations (including one where the Springfield Value Centre is today). And, naturally, most settlers expected their ‘subject natives’ to leave their ‘locations’ and snap up work opportunities to help their sugar crops compete on the international market. When the Truro docked in the bay on the 16th of November 1860, carrying the first 341 South African Indians from present-day Chennai, the settler community is said to have greeted them with apprehension and relief. The former stemmed from their frustration that a whole new group of “exotic” subjects needed to be introduced to the colony to seal the enterprise. But the latter came from the fact that no-one doubted the formula was complete. Natal would work. Indians had been the missing link in the assembly-line and now the returns would start to stack.

As their story has been more widely told in recent years, I will not repeat it here as a white writer (though I’m sure I’ll dive in for a future article). Let me just quote the masters, Ashwin Desai & Goolam Vahed: “The city of Durban was built on racist exclusions and cynical, acquisitive incorporations by British settlers. [...] Indians were hounded and herded into distinct locations, close enough to be of service before dawn, but out of sight when not at work. [...] And yet, somehow defying colonial and apartheid spatial planning, [their world] endured, if not in the heart, certainly in the liver of Durban’s city grid.” Their role on the farms cannot be doubted. According to Eric Rosenthal, by “1875 the entire [sugar] yield of Natal was 10,157 tons. For 1892 it was only 15,552 tons, and even in 1902, 26,300 tons. By the time of Union [1910] it had climbed, after many setbacks, to 82,000 tons. Not until 1914 was the six-figure mark for the first time passed [...] Today [1963] it is well over a million.” Only 9% of KZN Indians were still working in the sugar industry then, but so many had already given their lives to it with scarce recognition.

Amongst the luckiest of the white settlers, these exponential results built a small leisure society of entitlement and obliviousness that was both centuries past its time and would take a hundred years to penetrate. Still today, we speak of the ‘Old Durban Families’ (always capitalised) and organise civic campaigns around the notion of ‘Saving Our Berea’. But this familiarity blinds us to the weirdness of the situation. Apart from maybe the Newlands brewing industry, South Africa has never otherwise given birth to such an ancient regime. Its aristocratic founders, however, boasted of their small beginnings. Liege Hulett was once a chemist’s assistant from Sheffield who struggled for years to maintain profits on a tea-farm that he named Kearsney. William Pearce, the man behind Illovo, came to reflect on his early endeavours in the style of Ayn Rand: “I had to be manager, sugar boiler, a bit of an engineer and field overseer and, having served five years in a wagonmaking and blacksmith shop, I was able to do all my own repairs to wagons both in woodwork and blacksmithing.” And Marshall Campbell, the doyen of Mount Edgecombe, lost and had to remake his fortune twice thanks to bank failures - at least according to his nephew, Roy.

Two things, of course, can be true at once. We can respect the sugar entrepreneurs for their enterprise, their hardiness, their visions of what South Africa could be in the global market (just as we can begrudgingly respect the Oppenheims and Ruperts), but we really cannot deny that their privileges were built on a foundation of guaranteed labour and cheap land that today’s capitalists must surely envy in the depths of their numb hearts. The proof of this legacy is what remains of it today.

Tongaath-Hulett’s reputation has, of course, soured into all-out corruption. And Durban itself often feels like a Dickensian house, full of Miss Havishams. ‘Durban Gothic’ has recently become a literary genre in itself. In her new book *The Lost Love of Akbar Manzil*, the wonderful novelist Shubnum Khan imagines the soul of the city as an immortal djinn trapped in a decaying mansion overlooking the Golden Mile. My friend Sven Axelrad reimagines it in his *Buried Treasure* as ‘Vivo’, a humid netherworld where the dead can’t stay dead as so few can afford to be buried. And Claire Robertson, in her overlooked *Under Glass*, reimagines the roots of our home in the 1850s: “The sugar business is just the merest surface of the place, some necessary office that the people and the land must co-operate in but does not touch on the essential nature of either. Even scraped of its native sod, lilies and ancient trees, and furred over with a uniform waving green pelt [...] it is itself, down to the moisture of the soil. [...] For all of her misgivings about ownership or the lack, there is already a partnership.” I hope it won’t always be a bitter one.



JETOUR DE FORCE

Jetour, a relatively new player in the global motoring market, has set its sights firmly on South Africa. Despite intense competition, the Chinese automotive brand is confident in its ability to make an impression, launching in South Africa with two stunning SUVs, a 10-year/1 000 000km warranty, and a laser-sharp focus on after-sales service & customer satisfaction.

Jetour's two initial offerings for the local market, the seven-seater X70 Plus and the five-seater Dashing, both offer a combination of style, comfort and advanced technology in two variants — Momentum and Deluxe — for a 4-variant line-up from the start (following the initial launch, Jetour South Africa will reportedly also be rolling out “Pro” variants of the Dashing and X70 Plus in 2025).

The Dashing incorporates a futuristic design language, with attractively slim LED headlamps and sinuous lines down the flanks. The spacious X70 Plus may be less daring in its appearance, however its smart cabin configuration is a stand-out feature, allowing for comfortable seating for seven people.

The Dashing and X70 Plus are powered by a 1.5-litre 4-cylinder turbopetrol engine delivering 115 kW and 230 Nm of torque. Jetour offers its products exclusively with dual-clutch auto transmissions and the 4 launch derivatives are front-wheel driven, whilst being built off Jetour's unique Kunlun platform architecture. To ensure a smooth market entry, Jetour has also invested heavily in its South African operations, establishing a local parts inventory of R100m, securing a nationwide dealer network, and investing in training facilities to equip its sales and after-sales teams with the necessary skills to deliver superior customer service.

It would appear that the groundwork has now been laid and it's “all systems go” for this dynamic auto brand determined to win the local market... A tour de force indeed!

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IT'S A CRUEL CRAZY BEAUTIFUL WORLD...

Words: Dave Charles

FOR AS LONG as I can remember I have been a collector of words, particularly the words of songs – the lyrics. I have an enormous repertoire of lyrics in my head, some partial but most are complete.

As an alumnus of the Anglican private school system, I find that certain hymns that I couldn't understand as a child, now bring a sense of comfort when I lie awake in the darkness, consumed by a sense of panic that my time here is running out.

But most of the repertoire in my head is a vast collection of secular stories from the past six and a half decades, told by countless voices in songs that have shaped my perception of the world.

Some of the voices are more familiar than others. I often hear the voice of my grandfather, now long gone, singing songs that I in turn sang for my children and now, my three-year-old grandson, Kai.

Kai and I have a weekend routine – pancakes! I have become rather good at whipping up a batch when he is due for a visit, and we make them together. Last week when he ran into my arms for a hug, I heard another voice. It was the voice of my friend Johnny singing a song that he wrote for his son, Jesse, many years ago.

It's a cruel, crazy, beautiful world

Every time you wake up, I hope it's under a blue sky

I met Johnny Clegg at Wits University in 1977. I was completely lost after a year in the army and the country was burning. He and Sipho Mchunu, a garden worker in Houghton, had a duo that I heard perform at a show in the Great Hall and I was captivated. We became friends and when his musical career took off, I had graduated into the broadcast media world, so I was able to help in a small way to spread the love.

Those were difficult times politically and socially and as Johnny's star rose, the Security Branch made it very difficult for his music to reach the South African audience. But I played his music on Radio 5 – the big national music station, and was suspended on several occasions for playing tracks about social injustice that were "restricted" for airplay.



million people who were watching the show that night. Johnny became a force to be reckoned with on the local and international music scene and we stayed in touch.

Over the years we reconnected a few times, older, heavier, more lines on the face – but always a twinkle in the eye. Our final meeting was in Ballito shortly before his death and the last goodbye was profound.

In retrospect, it's easy to understand how much we took for granted. We were young and strong, and the world was full of possibility.

But all of those tomorrows have too soon become yesterdays and that face in the mirror looks more like my grandfather every day.

I think of him often when I am making pancakes for Kai – and I think of Johnny and so many others, and I hope that one day, Kai remembers how much I loved him.

When I feel your small body close to mine

I feel weak and strong at the same time

So few years to give you wings to fly

Show you the stars to guide your ship by

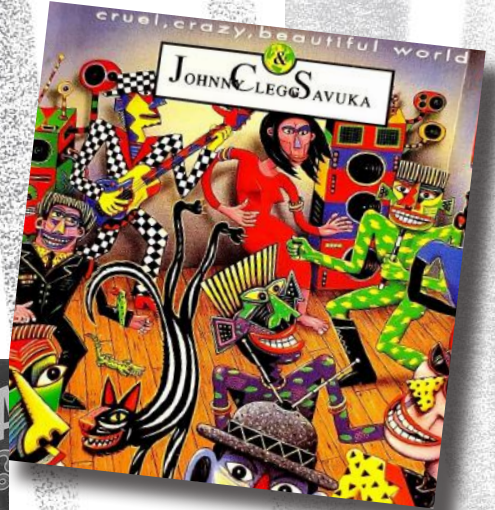
It's a cruel, crazy, beautiful world

One day when you wake up, I will have to say goodbye

Say goodbye

It's your world so live in it

Goodbye, it's your world so live in it



As a specialist television producer, I was responsible for a TV show called Sundowner, the biggest live magazine show on SABC TV1 back then. It was on Sundowner that I was able to debut the music video of Cruel Crazy Beautiful World to over six

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