

Local tea company celebrates 21 years of success

Joe Swart and Jonathan Kelsey formed [Joekels Tea Packers](#) in 1994, believing there was a gap in the market for an affordably priced, quality tea and so the Phendula brand (which means "to turn around or change" in Zulu) was born.



The planning began in earnest in Swart's garage, until they were able to secure their first official work space in Pinetown, where they and five support staff started production of the first Phendula Tips tea bags. They initially used a cement mixer, purchased from a friend, to blend the tea, using an all-African selection of tealeaves to create a strong, rich flavour (which over time became the trademark of the Phendula brand).

Friends and family were all roped in to promote and purchase the first packs of Phendula Tips, in order to start stimulating demand for the brand in the trade. Success did not come overnight, but Swart and Kelsey pushed forward, with the firm belief that "if we have a good product, then people have to buy it."

Today, Joekels Tea Packers is the third largest tea manufacturer in South Africa, recipient of multiple prestigious awards and a producer of a wide range of tea brands that have become household names in South Africa – including Laager Rooibos, Laager Tea4Kidz, and Tetley.

"It is a testament to our quality that we are still selling our first product Phendula Tips, despite all the changes and growth that has happened over the last 21 years," says Swart. The team still believes that Phendula Tips has huge growth potential, as it holds true to the initial brand vision of "giving South Africans a premium tea at an economy price."

Says Kelsey, "When we started Phendula, we were both ready for a change and we believed South Africans were ready for a change too."

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