

Cultivating a culture of food sharing



By Ruth Cooper

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Cape Town chef and founder of the NPO, Trio, Ammaarah Petersen is on a mission to help feed, teach, and uplift communities through food. By inviting Capetonians to share their good deeds and food experiences online at Indi.com, a new social media platform, she hopes to inspire individuals to connect and support communities in need.

Ammaarah's challenge is simple: "Upload a picture or video of yourself actively sharing food with those around you. Whether it be friends, family, or the less fortunate. I want Capetonians to become part of a community of caregivers through food," she says.

By sharing food experiences on Indi.com before Monday, 10 July 2017, individuals are entered into a competition to stand the chance to win a home dinner to the value of R1,500 for them and their partner from Chef Ammaarah along with R500 donated on their behalf towards feeding the community. We got in touch with her to find out more.



❏ Can you please explain the thought and process behind the Indi.com partnership?

I joined Indi a few months back with the vision to create an online platform for people to learn about food. To get ideas on how to add variety to their diets and share their techniques, recipes and all-time favourites. I believe that food is only unhealthy when it's prepared incorrectly or eaten too often.

After some strategic planning, I was going to only launch the channel once I had launched my cook book in November 2017. However, after getting some advice from Lawrence Hirson (from Indi), I felt the need to start the "[sharing is caring](#)" challenge to create awareness about the Trio initiative and to use the platform to get people sharing through food in a really fun, interactive, yet encouraging way. A month later we are at 81k views and I couldn't think of looking back.

indi.com is the new social platform that invites users to share their talent, stories, or ideas. These are posted in the form of “challenges” that other users can then accept and interact with and the amount of social buzz (likes, views, comments and shares) the content generates determines the winner.

■ ***What has feedback been like thus far?***

I have received lots of feedback, some negative and some positive. The negative being that one shouldn't share the good we do, some people believe that doing things for show takes away the goodness. My response to those people has been that people do what they see, the initiative's intention wasn't to show off the good deeds of others but to inspire and encourage others to do good and share through food. Also, I am told that handing out food will just keep people tied down, making them lazy and dependent on the hand that feeds them. To that I say if one person gets inspired and empowered through the food being handed out, our efforts are well worth it.

The positives have been people and businesses wanting to come on board and support the project through participating as well as sponsoring some ingredients, facilities and ideas to increase awareness around the project itself. The most important positive for me is to get people participating and sharing their food.



■ ***Can you tell us more about your NPO, Trio?***

Since a young age I knew I wanted to make a difference in people's lives. I had dreamt of having a facility that underprivileged individuals could come and learn the techniques and skills of cooking. One day I spoke to my coach about my goals and vision. He asked me a really good question and that was, "What can I do now to take a step in that direction?" and I started cooking for the community a month later in 2015. I officially launched Trio in 2016 with the mission to feed communities and the vision to teach, transform and triumph through food.

When I was asked why I started this movement, I replied, "I felt like this was something I could do for my community. My dad works overseas and one day after cooking, I sent my dad a video of what we were doing. He brought tears to my eyes, when he said if this was 50 years ago, I would have been one of those kids standing in the line for food. That changed my world and I knew I needed to take it further."

Since then, Trio has been feeding Athlone and the surroundings areas. We have friends and families who donate food, money, equipment or their time. We come together to cook and have loads of fun while doing so. We go to different parts of the 7764 area and feed between 200-300 people per cooking session.

There will always be a need for people to be fed and for hands to help and be helped. Though I personally feel that giving a hand out doesn't help as much as giving a hand up, but this is something I am using as a starting platform to get where I know we will be very soon. I believe that starting something is better than waiting for that perfect situation to happen.

▣ ***What have been some of your success stories?***

For us, the most touching moment was when we experienced a kid, not even four feet tall, walking almost 400 meters with his bowl and spoon in hand, coming to get something to eat and the smile on his face when he received his food brought tears to my eyes just to think that this small boy, at this young age was battling his hunger on his own.

Another amazing story was when we got to a safe haven for sexually and physically abused kids, 20 of them living in a two-bedroom council house. One very strong, amazing woman looking after all of them, converted her drive-way into bedrooms for these beautiful children and only getting R280 per child per month from the government to take care of their needs. Seeing their smiles and gratitude was priceless.

Lastly, last month June 2017, we reached an incredible figure of feeding 2000 people in the space of 5 days.





■ **What would your desert island dish be?**

I would have to say a vanilla panna cotta served with a mixed berry compote and fresh cream. It's a really simple dessert

yet very different. You can find the recipe on my [blog](#).

▣ **What does food mean to you?**

Everything! One cannot live well, do well or even sleep well if one hasn't dined well. To me food is life, it's love, it's something that when made, prepared and served with love can create a euphoric experience for an individual and help them fulfil their life's purpose.

▣ **What's next?**

Getting sponsors on board to get the cooking program up and running. We will create a space where young individuals will learn, cook, give back to their community and that will help keep them off the streets. A place they can turn to for support and encouragement. If you know of any businesses or any individuals that would be interested in supporting this project, please do contact us by clicking [here](#).

hotchefs.co.za

View Ammaarah's profile on Indi.com [here](#)

ABOUT RUTH COOPER

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