

Two decades in food driven by passion

 By Cari Coetzee

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The President Hotel in Bantry Bay, Cape Town has welcomed travellers from around the world for decades and the hotel's longest-standing employee has been around for two of those. We chat to Caroline Ncoko about her journey with the "President" and her passion for the industry.



Caroline Ncoko

■ ***Tell us about your journey with the President Hotel***

I've been working at the President Hotel for 20 years. My journey at the hotel has been challenging as I continue to learn and maintain a high level of service to the guests and my colleagues. While my job can be tough, at the end of the day I really enjoy working in this industry because I'm pursuing my passion for food, work with an amazing team, and make a positive impact in the day-to-day life of the guests.

My highlights include being awarded employee of the month three times and being promoted to senior chef de partie and then junior sous chef.

■ ***What inspired you to become a chef and what drives your passion for food?***

I have always dreamt about being a chef since I was a little girl. From an early age, I realised that I not only loved food, but I was very creative when it came to cooking. After high school, I applied for the hospitality course at Eziko Cooking and Catering School in Langa. They equipped me with the skills needed to make my dream of being a chef a reality.

■ ***What is your opinion on the hospitality's potential for job creation – offering our youth, female youth, in particular, opportunities for employment and career fulfilment?***

The hospitality industry is great for job creation as it includes a wide range of job paths and skills that are transferable to any career. This industry also recognises powerful women as you see more and more females succeeding in managerial positions today. I would like all young women of South Africa to be given an opportunity to be trained in this industry as it is an opportunity to build interpersonal skills, understand commitment and motivation, and communication.

■ ***What barriers did you face, as a woman, becoming successful in your field and how did you overcome them?***

When I first applied for my hospitality course, the majority of my class were men, but I had a lot of support from my manager who gave me the confidence to succeed. My passion and faith in my own skills, paired with the tools taught through the course are what allowed me to become more creative and entrepreneurial in making food a career.

▣ ***What advice would you give to other young women in South Africa who would like to become chefs or pursue a career in hospitality?***

My advice to young women in South Africa is that they find what they love to do and make a career out of it. That is not to say that your work will always be easy, but it will be worth it in the end. Believe and invest in yourself. Never stop learning, and surround yourself with others who support you.

▣ ***What is your message for Women's Month?***

If they put their faith in themselves and their goals, women can achieve whatever they want in life.

ABOUT CARI COETZEE

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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