

Building community through African food storytelling with Dennis Molewa and Airbnb

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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For centuries, stories have been the most expressive and immersive way to learn about history and heritage, allowing people to explore different cultures and see and do things that bring a country's diversity to life.



Source: Supplied | Oliver Petrie

Doing this in South Africa is Airbnb, which has a number of unique Airbnb Experiences designed to transport travellers to the heart of South Africa's cultural makeup.

Experiences tell the story of the host's unique perspective and passion, whether it's their love of street food, sewing, or the history of their neighborhood.

Hosts share their insider knowledge with guests and give them behind-the-scenes access to people, places, and activities that guests couldn't typically find on their own, and provide opportunities for guests to meaningfully engage in the activities of the experience, not just passively observe them.

One such experience is the off-the-beaten-track tour of downtown Cape Town through an African food and storytelling experience. The group tour takes visitors' tastebuds on a food safari featuring authentic African dishes and homemade drinks.

Community kitchens and restaurants

The experience, which comprises three hours of walking in the heart of Cape Town, includes about five to seven stops, where groups celebrate and get to listen to African (mainly) food entrepreneurs. Here, the city centre is abuzz with tourists, music and an array of items to purchase.

Groups also get a chance to listen to these food entrepreneurs' stories about how they managed to create unique and meaningful community spaces despite harsh and challenging economic and social conditions with few affordable trading spaces available.



Source: Supplied | Yann Macherez



Source: Supplied | Oliver Petrie

From South Africa up to Mali, with a stop left to Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, the tour shares insights about the diverse and complex traditions of Somali food culture and the fragrant spices used in African countries that border the Red Sea.

Visitors share fresh injera, steaming soft pap and floral cafe touba, while listening to stories about food and community from East, West and South Africa.

Hosted by food storyteller and entrepreneur Dennis Molewa and musician and producer Sindile Kamlana aka Khofhi The King, the pair offer a meaningful, impactful and authentic African food experience.

On asking Molewa what inspired him to create a tour like this, he says: "I did this because I am passionate. I am passionate about African entrepreneurs and passionate about telling the stories of Black African entrepreneurs in Cape Town.



Source: Supplied | Marie-Laure Roux

"For us, our main intention or motivation behind starting this tour or experience is firstly to share a different perspective of Cape Town, to show a different side of Cape town, to tell the stories about marginalised Black African food entrepreneurs, their real-life stories, and then to also put a spotlight on African cuisine in a city where we celebrate and worship modern European cuisine."

"Cape town is more than just Table Mountain, there is an underrepresented side to it too," says Molewu.

Role food plays in community

A core intention of this tour, says Molewa, is highlighting the role of food in different African communities across the diaspora. And then, also, counteracting the xenophobia that is going on in South Africa where people have such a hostile attitude towards other Black African foods.

"You hardly see any South African's going into a Senegalese restaurant or Cameroonian restaurant, so breaking down these preconceived ideas, and demonstrating how food has the power to get us together and build and learn about each other and discover similarities between us is our goal."

Speaking to the future, Molewa says: "We have also just launched a second African Food and Storytelling experience for Salt River and Observatory. Then we are going to add one more for Bellville and Johannesburg's CBD.

"I definitely want for us to grow within South Africa and take it to other African countries."



Source: Supplied | Oliver Petrie

Like his role model Anthony Bourdain, Molewa says that he would love to tell the different stories of different communities. In Bellville, for instance, Molewa hopes to focus on Ethiopian and Somali communities. "Lots of people are scared to go these areas, but we go there to have the most authentic, delicious East African food and there's a lot of diversity in Salt River too, such as Nigerian and Zimbabwean restaurants.

"We hope to educate people more about entrepreneurship, what it takes to be a food entrepreneur in an African country and the importance of preserving our identity through food and educating people about African cuisine and bringing them together, have a good time while listening to stories. That is our main intention and this is our wish for the future."

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- KZN: [Hike and shower at ReserveFalls in Kloof, KwaZulu-Natal.](#)
- Cape Town: [Cycling in Cape Town's largest township.](#)

Heritage through gourmet experiences

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For more information on the [African food and storytelling tour](#), visit Airbnb or contact Dennis Molewa at +27 79 786 5551.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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