

Tsogo Chef's Challenge sees chefs cooking outside their comfort zone

The first Tsogo Chef's Challenge - which takes Tsogo's leading chefs out of their comfort zones and challenges them to prepare a meal for a group of foodies in a unique location on the property - saw Chef Gareth Jordaan of the Lucé restaurant in the Southern Sun Hyde Park hotel present 15 lunch guests with tasting portions from his new menu in the porte cochère of the hotel.

The second exclusive gathering of foodie bloggers and media on 26 January challenged Chef Kenny Ngubane of Aarya Restaurant to produce tasting portions of selected dishes from Aarya's menu. Aarya is a collaboration between Deena Naidoo, the first winner of MasterChef SA, and Tsogo Sun, and is located at SunSquare Montecasino in Fourways.



The menu for the event included canapés – smoked salmon, crème cheese with blinis and caviar, grilled Mediterranean vegetables, basil pesto and parmesan shavings, and Parma ham with marinated vodka melon balls. The first course brought platters of exotic pizza starters and delicious intermediate salads. The main course was an Aarya speciality – a trio of curry consisting of rich, decadent butter chicken, bean and prawn, served with condiments, Jeera basmati and roti. Dessert was the perfect ending to the Aarya showcase – upside down cheesecake with lemon curd and a South African cheese selection with preserves and water biscuits.

Aarya's wine list includes a selection of wines handpicked by Tsogo Sun at the Nederburg and Cape Winemakers Guild auctions last year, bringing some of South Africa's finest wines to the table.







Chef Ngubane, who started his career in 1990 and has been with Tsogo Sun since 2007, is now executive chef at Montecasino with strong involvement in Aarya. He says of the Challenge: “To be in an environment that I am not accustomed to is very liberating and a breath of fresh air.” The biggest challenge was being outdoors without easy access to resources. His favourite item on the menu are the welcome snacks “because that’s something we don’t do much at Aarya.”

Chef Ngubane has been delivering on the vision created by Deena and Togo Sun for the restaurant since it opened, and has been the backbone of the operation, ensuring a consistent, quality culinary experience at the Montecasino restaurant. He loves Aarya for “the interactive, exposed kitchen and the modern take on comfort food.”

Priya Naidoo, Tsogo Sun’s GM, group communication, says the group has tremendous confidence in its chefs’ abilities to deliver excellent food – under just about any circumstances. “This is a fun challenge for us and for them – and hopefully for our invited guests – and it gives our chefs the opportunity to showcase the amazing scope of their offerings within their restaurants, and their logistical skills in preparing delicious food against the odds, with smiles on their faces.”

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