

Finalists announced for Chef of the Year competition

This year the Unilever Foodsolutions Chef of the Year has an international component as chefs from all over South Africa, Egypt, Dubai and Pakistan will be competing for the title. Prize money totalling R90 000 will act as magic ingredient.

“Our competition has truly grown in status and prestige over the years,” said Craig Elliot, executive head chef of Unilever Foodsolutions SA. “Since its early days as the Marvello Chef of the Year, when the likes of Bill Gallagher and Glynn Sinck entered and won the competition, the Chef of the Year has facilitated talented South African chefs to go on to achieve great heights in their careers, something of which Unilever Foodsolutions is immensely proud.”

International component

The addition of the Team component in 2007 gave novice chefs, who would otherwise not have the opportunity, the chance to showcase their skills and kick-start their careers, and in 2009, with the addition of the international component in the Senior category, Unilever's philosophy of advancement is continued.

“The inclusion of a multi-national component in the Senior category will expose our chefs to global culinary standards and challenge them even further to prove that South Africa can hold its own among the best culinary talent in the world,” continued Elliot.

In the Senior category, the seven finalists will compete for first prize of R15 000, second prize of R10 000 and third prize of R5000 - and the title of Unilever Foodsolutions Chef of the Year.

South Africa's finalists in the Senior category include:

- Sharmaine Dixon (1000 Hills Chef School, Durban)
- Dilene Cranna (Logistics Manager of Team SA, Johannesburg)
- Candice Phillip (The Saxon Boutique Hotel and Spa)
- Albert van der Loo (Dieu Douwe, Cape Town)

In the Junior category, five of South Africa's top up-and-coming young chefs - all with less than five years' experience and aged under 30 - will be competing for the first prize of R10 000, second prize of R6000 and third prize of R4000.

The five Junior category finalists are:

- Misha Engelbrecht (Riverside Hotel in Johannesburg)
- Gareth Walford (Michelangelo Hotel, Johannesburg)
- Tiaan Langenegger (Wild Mushroom Boutique Hotel, Cape Town)
- Brett Warwick Harvey (1000 Hills Chef School, Durban)
- Berlinda Angelo (also of the 1000 Hills Chef School, Durban)

In the Team of Four category, six teams consisting of four members; a team manager (or executive chef), senior cook, junior cook and a waiter, will present a starter, main course and dessert for six people. The overall winners in the Team of Four category will win a cash prize of R20 000, second prize R12 000 and third prize R8000.

The six teams from establishments across the country are:

- Team ABSA Compass in Johannesburg - Allen Rheeder, Justice Gama, Phireas Kadiaka and Price Moya

- The Riverside Hotel in Johannesburg - Andrew Robertson, Alinah Tekana, Sarah Mokhotla and Lebo Mashini
- Compass Group in Durban - Fiona Kleinhans, Oliver Reddy, Luke Reddy and Sandra Reddy
- Residential Foundations Mooihavens in Durban - Nellet Yendal, Matthew Nzama, Sadiswa Nkukwana, Sibongile Mthetwa
- The Raddison Blu Hotel in Cape Town - Stuart Cason, Rozanne Dos Sates, Clarice Biljohn and Reece Thompson
- WPC in Cape Town - Nicolette Louw, Dulcie Smit, Arnold Pieter and Patrick Visagie

Each category of the competition takes the form of a mystery basket competition, in which they have just half an hour to come up with their menu, and then three hours to prepare a starter, main course and dessert - utilising the ingredients that they were given just a few hours before. The young contestants will be under great pressure to come up with the most innovative, creative and flavourful dishes possible.

Judges

The judges for the cook-off include some of South Africa's top head chefs, including Andrew Atkinson of the Michelangelo Hotel, Garth Shnier of the Sandton Sun, Stephen Billingham, president of the South African Chefs Association, as well as three international judges.

The cook-off takes place on Friday, 11 September 2009 in Durban. For further information on the competition, go to www.unileverfoodsolutions.co.za.

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