

## Chef Sanele's journey from home kitchen to hotel hero celebrating Africa Day at Town Lodge Umhlanga

As Africa Day on Sunday, 25 May approaches, City Lodge Hotels is celebrating the incredible culinary talent in its kitchens. At its Town Lodge Umhlanga property, one name stands out: Chef Sanele Zikhali. Passionate, driven and creative, she's the heart behind the hotel's most-loved dishes, with her Shisa Nyama leading the flavour parade.

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Zikhali's culinary journey took courage: "My passion for cooking began with the joy of creating dishes and experimenting with flavours. I knew early on that I wanted to pursue a career as a professional chef, but the definitive decision was made at university. Although I was studying for a Bachelor of Education, I realised my true calling lay elsewhere. I craved creativity and artistic expression, so after a year, I left university to pursue my culinary aspirations. It was a bold move, but one that ultimately set me on the right path."

Her training journey at college was all about learning culinary skills and building relationships, making new friends and embracing the enriching and exciting experience.

"My cooking at Town Lodge Umhlanga continues to evolve and is a testament to my dedication and love for the craft. Although the culinary profession can be physically demanding and challenging, it's also incredibly fulfilling. Working with the team every day has taught me valuable lessons, and the appreciation from those who enjoy my food, has made it all worthwhile. The dish that guests love the most is the Shisa Nyama," she says.

For Zikhali, food is tied to deep emotion: "My favourite home-cooked meal is a beef goulash and steamed bread. My mother used to cook it for us when my siblings and I were young, especially at winter time. Ever

time I cook it now, I'm reminded of my childhood and it also excites my mom.”

The Seven Colours Sunday tradition is especially close to her heart: “It’s more than just a dish with colourf ingredients – it’s time for family to come together, like a joyful gathering after church, and creating lasting memories with the people you love.

Chef Zikhali in brief:

- Favourite ingredient: Garlic
- Least favourite flavour: Sour
- Top kitchen tool: Her trusty knife
- Always in stock: Eggs and jam
- Favourite restaurant: Ocean Basket
- Dream foodie trip: Paris
- Chef she admires: Onezwa Mbola
- Comfort food: Pasta
- Food trends she’d end: Devilled Eggs and Chicken à la King

As City Lodge Hotels continues to honour heritage and homegrown talent, chefs like Zikhali remind us that the best stories are told through food. Happy Africa Day from our kitchens to yours!







## **Sanele's Slow Roasted Lamb Shank**

(Serves 4)

Chef Sanele Zikhali at Town Lodge Umhlanga has created a new take on the traditional lamb shank, served on creamy sweet potato mash, and topped with a flavourful red wine sauce – the perfect winter warmer!

### **Meat:**

Ingredients:

4 lamb shanks

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 cups olive oil

15ml (1 tbsp) ground pepper

5ml (1 tsp) salt

6 sprigs thyme (fresh)

4 sprigs rosemary (fresh)  
pinch of any aromatic flavour  
85ml (1/3 cup) red wine

Method:

1. Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.
2. Add all the ingredients in a small mixing bowl and stir to combine. Pour the marinade over the meat.
3. Transfer the marinated meat into the cooking tray.
4. Cover the meat with foil and cook for 2 hours.
5. Keep checking the meat so that it does not fall off the bone.
6. Once the meat is cooked, keep the bone marrow aside for the sauce.

**Sauce:**

Ingredients:

2 garlic cloves, minced  
60ml (1/4 cup) butter  
1 jalapeno (minced)  
sprig rosemary and thyme (finely chopped)  
1 cup cream  
pinch of any aromatic flavour  
lamb shank bone marrow  
60ml (1/4 cup) cheddar cheese

Method:

1. Place saucepan on the stove over a low heat – keep heat low so you don't burn the sauce.
2. Melt the butter. When melted and hot, add the garlic, jalapeno and chopped herbs.
3. Mix all together to create the sauce and cook until golden brown.
4. Add the cream and cheese, and stir until combined.
5. Add seasoning to taste and remove from the heat.
6. Ready to serve.

**Creamy Sweet Potato Mash:**

Ingredients:

4 medium-sized sweet potatoes  
1 cup cream  
2 Laughing Cow cheese wedges

Method:

1. Boil the sweet potato.
2. Once cooked, remove the water and add cream and Laughing Cow cheese wedges to the potatoes, and mash until smooth.
3. Add a little Aromat – no other seasoning required.

To serve, add a dollop of creamy sweet potato mash onto the plate and top with a lamb shank and sprigs of

rosemary, then pour on the sauce. You can add some quick roasted vegetables or other veggies of your choice, or top with a slice of charred orange for extra visual appeal and tang. Bon appetit!

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