



SOUTH AFRICAN
CHEFS ASSOCIATION
EST. 1974

SA Chefs Business Breakfast 2025

President's Address

Thursday 13 March 2025
School of Tourism and Hospitality,
University of Johannesburg

Chef Coo Pillay



SA Chefs Honorary presidents, Chef Heinz Brunner and Chef Stephen Billingham, though absent, Chef Manfred Muellers & Chef Martin Kobald, Immediate Past President James Khoza, Vice - Presidents Tommie Hurter and Warren Frantz, the board of directors as well as the members of the AOC, with all protocols observed.

Good morning, distinguished corporate partners, stakeholders, esteemed colleagues, and all of you who have made the time to be here today. It is both an honor and a privilege to stand before such a distinguished gathering, at this SA Chefs Business Breakfast for 2025, this is an opportunity to share our goals and to look ahead to the opportunities and challenges that await us as we move forward together.

First, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of you for your continued support. To our corporate partners and stakeholders, your commitment to our noble industry has been nothing short of extraordinary. It is through your investment and vision that we have been able to continue advancing the profession, empowering chefs, and nurturing the next generation of talent.

The work that we do at SA Chefs is only possible because of the collaborative relationships we share with partners like you. Together, we've created a platform that uplifts and strengthens the culinary industry across South Africa and beyond.

Last year was a momentous year for SA Chefs having celebrated our Golden Jubilee, whilst it is a celebration indeed built on a foundation and legacy of chefs and visionaries, we need to look beyond and embrace the new world and culture we find ourselves in. Earlier this year, I gathered the Board, Office Staff and our Committee Chairs for a Strategy and Vision Indaba. Before we commenced, I posed a question – Who is SA Chefs? Whilst the answers were great – it had no relevance to world we serve today.

We needed to ask the Why in What We Do

As we gather here today, I'd like to take a moment to ask a question that lies at the heart of everything we do within SA Chefs - Why?

Why do we, as chefs, dedicate ourselves to the culinary arts? Why do we invest time, energy, and passion into an industry that often demands long hours, intense pressure, and constant innovation? Why do we push boundaries, educate the next generation, and advocate for our profession on national and international stages?

Why Do We Do What We Do?

At the core of our mission as SA Chefs is the belief that food is not merely sustenance—it is an expression of culture, identity, and creativity. Food brings people together. It tells the stories of our heritage and our future. It is about more than just preparing meals; it is about creating experiences, fostering connections, and shaping communities.

Why Is the SA Chefs Association Important?

The SA Chefs Association exists because we believe in the power of the collective. We recognize that the culinary industry is not a single individual effort but a community—united by a shared passion for excellence. The “why” behind SA Chefs is to foster collaboration between chefs, industry partners, and stakeholders to ensure that



industry as a whole thrives. We support one another to raise standards, champion sustainability, and ensure that our craft is not only appreciated but also sustainable for future generations.

Our role is not just to represent the interests of chefs, but to shape the future of the culinary landscape in South Africa. By coming together as a collective, we are able to advocate for the needs of our industry, whether that's in the form of training programs, policies that support food security, or the sustainability of our local ingredients. We are also here to push the boundaries of what is possible in the kitchen—continually innovating and inspiring new trends and techniques.

Why Do We Value Our Corporate Partners and Stakeholders?

The “why” behind these relationships is a shared vision of growth, innovation, and sustainability. We cannot achieve the goals of SA Chefs without the continued support of those who understand the importance of investing in the future of our profession. Our corporate partners provide the resources, technologies, and expertise needed to build a more sustainable industry, and through our combined efforts, we create pathways for greater recognition, development, and opportunity. So, why do we do what we do? The answer is clear: We do it because we are passionate about our craft. We do it because food has the power to shape lives, to create connections, to tell stories, and to drive change. We do it because we are committed to making South Africa's culinary future brighter, stronger, and more sustainable.

As the SA Chefs Association, we have the privilege and responsibility to lead by example, to inspire those around us, and to continue asking ourselves: Why are we doing this, and how can we do it better? Our “why” should continue to fuel our passion, to guide our decisions, and to inspire others to join us on this exciting journey.

As a collaborative at the Strategy Indaba, we created a vision and mission for the coming 5 years.

Vision Statement:

To be the leading voice and professional body for chefs and culinary professionals in South Africa, promoting culinary excellence, sustainability, and education while advocating for the interests of the industry.

Mission Statement:

To represent, support, and advance the professional development of chefs, foster collaboration within the culinary community, and drive innovation and sustainability in the foodservice industry.

Today, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in the South African culinary landscape. We have witnessed tremendous growth, not just in the number of chefs and culinary professionals, but also in the recognition of South African cuisine globally. Our chefs continue to shine on the world stage, representing the heart and soul of our diverse nation through innovative dishes that speak to both our heritage and our future.

As a collective during our Indaba, we formulate 5 clear goals for the next 5 years which are:



1. Enhance Membership Engagement and Growth

Increase membership by 20% over the next 3 years and improve engagement among current members.

2. Elevate Culinary Education and Professional Development

Through our stakeholders, enhance the standard of culinary education and continuous learning for professionals in the industry.

3. Strengthen Financial Sustainability and Fundraising

Ensure long-term financial health of the association through diverse revenue streams.

4. Foster Community and Collaboration within the Culinary Industry

Strengthen relationships among chefs, restaurants, food producers, and other industry players.

5. Advocate for the Culinary Industry

Position SA Chefs as the authoritative voice in culinary policy and industry standards.

I am proud to introduce you to our organizational structure. Led and guided by our board of directors. We have support office based here in Auckland Park to support the association and its stakeholders. Through our national structures, we have our volunteer members who make up our regional and standing committees.

I would like at this moment introduce our Board of Directors and would like to request those of them present to stand up when I introduce them.

Warren Frantz – Vice President

Tommie Hurter – Vice President

James Khoza – Immediate Past President

Candice Adams

Sizwe Cebekhulu

Oliver Reddy

Andile Somdaka

Mahlomola Thamae

Gregory Henderson – co-opted Director

I would like to introduce our Office Team, lead by Thandeka Feliti our Operations Manager.

Elsu Gericke – Head of Education

Hudson Masondo – Project Manager

Jason Pitout – Financial Controller

Precious Maseko – Membership Coordinator

Kannelo Masia – Social Media Coordinator

We believe in a Total Organisation Approach, where through our Support Office at the heart of the organization, we work together as a collective between partners, the board, regional and portfolio committees and our members. Together in strength we will achieve more!



I would like to introduce some of our portfolio and committee chairs that you will be working with on various projects.

Governance, Finance, and Remuneration Committee – co chaired by myself and Oliver Reddy with the goal of Ensure financial stability and transparency and regularly reviewing the governance framework.

Membership and Regional Development Committee under the leadership of Warren Frantz with the aim of expanding membership across diverse regions and strengthen regional committees and chapters and encourage local engagement.

Communications and Media Committee under the guidance of Sizwe Cebekhulu who has the huge task of all aspects of communications in our organization.

Education and Designation Committee with the objective of Promoting culinary education and professional development and action designation program for chefs, is lead by Tommie Hurter who has also been nominated to serve on the Worldchefs Education Committee.

Competitions Committee is currently lead by its interim chair, Pieter Malan. Their aim is to Organize and expand prestigious culinary competitions while promoting healthy competition and fair judging to foster innovation and creativity. Pieter has been nominated as a shadow member of the Worldchefs Culinary Committee.

A newly established committee - Events and Marketing Committee, Together with the Office and Committees, Plan and organize events that promote the Association and industry while implementing the Events SOP. The committee chair is Absalom Kotsokoane, who will be sharing the Events Calendar with you later this morning.

Youth Development Committee incorporating the Young Chef Club mandated to Support the next generation of chefs and increase youth involvement in culinary competitions and training programs. The YCC is lead by Timothy de Villiers who is also a Worldchefs Young Chef Ambassador for the Middle East and Africa region.

Women in Culinary Committee which SA proudly pioneered with its launch in 2018 is lead by Sarah Gray and Zana Alvarado. The committee is to empower and advocate for women and the LGBTQ+ community in the culinary industry.

Chefpreneur Committee encourage chefs to explore entrepreneurship is currently being guided by Sizwe Cebekhulu whilst a Chair is appointed for the committee.

Restaurant Forum Committee to create a network of and provide a platform for restaurant chefs and owners is lead by Gregory Henderson.

Newly established by outgoing President James Khoza late last year is the International Stakeholder Relations Committee, under the leadership of Jocelyn Myers Adams. Building strong international partnerships and collaborations. Represent the interests of South African chefs on global culinary platforms.



Feed the Planet and Sustainability Committee, promoting sustainable practices within the culinary industry and advocating for food security and environmental responsibility is lead by Pinky Maruping.

As we look to the future, our partnerships will continue to play a crucial role. The collaboration between chefs and corporate partners is essential to driving innovation and sustainability. Together, we can tackle challenges like food security, sustainable sourcing, and mentorship programs that ensure our industry remains strong for generations to come.

We've already made strides in these areas, but there is still much work to be done. By joining forces, we can create programs that foster a new wave of chefs who are not only skilled in the kitchen but also equipped with the knowledge and tools to run successful, responsible businesses.

The future of our industry is built on innovation. We are seeing exciting trends whether it's in the area of plant-based cuisine, the rise of food technology, or the growing demand for sustainable practices. As we move forward, we must continue to embrace these shifts while maintaining our commitment to preserving the integrity of South African flavors and culinary traditions.

Sustainability remains at the core of our efforts. Our environment, our local farmers, and our communities are integral to the work we do, and it is our responsibility to ensure that our business practices are aligned with the values of sustainability, inclusivity, and social responsibility.

1. Brand Visibility and Recognition

Partners have the opportunity to sponsor events, competitions, and national culinary events, giving them prominent exposure to a wide audience. This can include opportunities to showcase their brand at high-profile events such as the SA Chef of the Year Competition and INFOCHEF.

By partnering with SA Chefs, brands can be integrated into the association's events, initiatives, and educational programs, which are attended by industry professionals, chefs, and decision-makers.

2. Talent Development and Recruitment

Corporate partners can engage in mentorship opportunities, providing expertise, resources, and guidance to aspiring chefs. This allows brands to develop the next generation of culinary talent while creating a long-term, loyal relationship with young professionals entering the field.

Partners can collaborate on educational workshops or certification programs. For example, providing training on new technologies, sustainability practices, or specific culinary techniques can help improve the skills of the broader culinary community.

3. Networking and Business Development

SA Chefs brings together culinary professionals, restaurateurs, suppliers, and stakeholders from various sectors. Partners can leverage this network to build valuable relationships, open new business channels, and collaborate on projects. Working alongside other like-minded companies can open doors for innovation and shared growth.



4. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Sustainability

Partners can work alongside SA Chefs to promote sustainable practices within the culinary industry. This could involve initiatives focused on sustainable sourcing and reducing food waste.

5. Access to Culinary Innovation and Trends

By collaborating with SA Chefs, corporate partners can stay on the cutting edge of culinary innovation. This includes exposure to emerging food trends, new cooking techniques, and the latest technologies in the foodservice industry.

Brands can collaborate with chefs to innovate and conduct product activations that are tailored to the needs of the South African market.

6. Event Participation and Exposure

Partners have the opportunity to sponsor or participate in prestigious culinary competitions, which offer exposure to both chefs and the public.

Through SA Chefs partners can extend their reach beyond South Africa and engage with international audiences, whether through culinary competitions, programs or global events. The prime opportunity being to support and sponsor our National Culinary Team

We are proud of our recent collaboration between SA Chefs, FEDHASA (Federated Hospitality Association of Southern Africa), and The Restaurant Collective which presents a powerful opportunity to strengthen and grow South Africa's culinary and hospitality industry. Each of these organizations plays a critical role in shaping the future of the food service and hospitality sectors, and by working together, we can maximize their collective impact on the industry.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of the FEDHASA representatives who have joined us this morning, welcome and thank you!

We call on you to support our community initiatives. At the heart is Chefs with Compassion. SA Chefs proudly established CWC amidst the lockdown in 2020 with its co-founders NOSH Food Rescue, Slow Food International and Strategic PR.

Over the past 5 years CWC has rescued over 500 tonnes of produce but more producing over 7 million meals for those in need. Currently CWC averages around 30k meals a week but can do a lot more with your support.

One of the largest annual initiatives which is going into its 6th installment is the 67000L for Mandela Day. We urge to support and make a difference for our communities. Last year as a national collaborate we produced over 100 000L of Soup producing over 400 000 cups of soup in 1 day.

As a proud Worldchefs member, we also support World Chefs Without Borders. Unfortunately our charity lunch planned for 23 March had to be postponed due to unforeseen circumstances but I call on you to contact Thandeka and pledge your support for the upcoming Lunch for a Cause that will benefit both Chefs with Compassion and World Chefs Without Borders. ur noble industry.



In closing, I want to reaffirm that the strength of SA Chefs lies not just in the talent of our chefs but in the partnerships we've built and the shared vision we hold for the future of the culinary industry. As we continue to evolve, we will do so with purpose and determination, knowing that we are not in this alone.

Thank you once again for your support, your commitment, and your belief in the power of our industry. Together, there are no limits to what we can achieve. I look forward to the continued collaboration and success that awaits us in the years ahead.

Enjoy the breakfast, and let's continue the conversations that will help us shape the future of our noble industry.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C. Pillay".

Chef Coo Pillay

