



SOUTH AFRICAN
CHEFS ASSOCIATION
EST. 1974

SA Chefs

50th Anniversary

Gala Dinner 2024

Past President's Address
Thursday 10 October 2024
The Wanderers Club, Illovo

Chef James Khoza



Good evening SA Chefs Members, Partners, and Friends,

It is my singular honour and privilege to address all of you present, gathered to celebrate this golden jubilee under the theme: "SA Chefs reimagined". I would like to take this moment to acknowledge all the dignitaries in this gathering: SA Chefs Honorary presidents, Chef Heinz Brunner, Chef Stephen Billingham, Though absent, Chef Manfred Muellers & Chef Martin Kobald, president Coo Pillay, the board of directors as well as the members of the AOC. A special mention to TBCSA CEO Tshifiwa Tshivhengwa all protocols observed.

Distinguished Guests,

As we celebrate the remarkable milestone of our 50th Golden Anniversary, it is a moment to reflect on our journey, honour our founders, and look ahead to an exciting future. Since our establishment in 1974 by six visionary chefs, the South African Chefs Association (SA Chefs) has grown to become the leading authority on the culinary arts in South Africa. We have represented the interests of thousands of chefs, nurtured talent, and stood proudly on the global stage. Today, we honour the incredible legacy of our founders, as well as those who have supported and guided us along the way. I think we can look back with measured pride on the history of the last 50 years. I am quite convinced that this celebration helps remind people in the tourism & hospitality value chain of the value of chefs in building the competitiveness of South Africa as a tourism destination.

This celebration would not be complete without acknowledging the selfless dedication of each of our past Presidents and their boards, whose tireless efforts have shaped SA Chefs into the esteemed organisation it is today. Each president has played a unique role in building our legacy, shaping the future of South African cuisine, and ensuring our global prominence. Furthermore, from our founding days through to the present, each president has left an indelible mark on our association and drew strength from all the presidents preceding him.

Our Presidents: A Legacy of Leadership

- Bill Fenname (1974-1976) – A founding visionary.
- Wolfgang Voigt (1976-1979) † – SA Chefs grew in influence and prestige.
- Manfred Muellers (1979-1982) – A distinguished educator and Certified Master Chef,
- Dr. Billy Gallagher (1982-2002) † – Dr. Billy Gallagher remains one of South Africa's culinary icons.
- Heinz Brunner (2000-2003) – Another culinary icon of our association
- Martin Kobald (2003-2008) – As Vice President of WACS elevated SA Chefs to greater global recognition.
- Stephen Billingham (2008-2017) – well known for his educational prowess.



1974-1984: The Birth of a Legacy

In 1974, a dream was realized when six chefs came together to create an association that would unify chefs across South Africa. This was a time of foundational work: we were officially named the South African Chefs Association in 1976, and by 1980, our chefs were already making their mark internationally, winning five gold medals at the IKA Culinary Olympics. The first decade of SA Chefs was defined by the passion, ambition, and determination to elevate South African cuisine to new heights.

1984-1994: Growth and International Recognition

The next decade saw SA Chefs begin to cement its role in the global culinary landscape. In 1986, the legendary Paul Bocuse graced our InfoChefs gala banquet as a guest of honour, signalling our growing prestige. In 1992, our Culinary Olympic Team earned 18 gold medals, a testament to the excellence of our chefs. South Africa hosted the World Chef Congress in 1988. The first World Chefs Tour Against Hunger in 1993 became a pivotal moment, raising R500, 000 for Operation Hunger and underscoring our association's commitment to community and global impact. The tour and a special book commemorating it raised a good deal of money for South African non-governmental organisations Operation Hunger and the Valley Trust.

1994-2004: A Golden Era for Leadership and Service

In 1996, the World Association of Chefs Societies (WACS) unanimously voted for South Africa to hold the esteemed offices of President, Vice President, and Secretary General—a proud moment for our nation. Dr. Billy Gallagher, our beloved Honorary Life President, was elected World President of WACS. His leadership continued to inspire, leaving an indelible mark on the global culinary community. SA Chefs launched the second World Chefs Tour Against Hunger, raising R1.5 million, and introduced International Chefs Day, a legacy that continues to this day.

2004-2014: Culinary Excellence and Professional Recognition

As we entered our fourth decade, SA Chefs continued to raise the bar. We launched the Tsogo Sun Centre for Culinary Excellence (CCE) in 2005, a significant investment in education and skills development. Our Culinary Team SA brought home gold from the IKA Culinary Olympics in 2008, and in 2013, the first African Culinary Cup took place. Most notably, in 2013, we were awarded Professional Body Status by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)—a milestone that confirmed our commitment to developing culinary talent at the highest level.

2014-2024: Innovation Resilience and Impact

In the most recent decade, SA Chefs has continued to thrive and innovate. Our National Youth Chefs Training Programme, supported by the Department of Tourism, has trained over 2,500 young chefs, creating pathways for future culinary leaders. The World Chefs Tour Against Hunger raised millions for those in need, and our membership has grown to over 9,000. Even through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have stood strong, continuing to serve our members and adapt to new realities.



As we elected our ninth president at yesterday's AGM, I reflect on the extraordinary journey of our association. Each step has been built on the passion and dedication of chefs, partners, and supporters like you. I am deeply grateful to every member who has been part of this journey—your loyalty and contributions have been the cornerstone of our success.

I also extend a heartfelt thank you to the National Department of Tourism for supporting the training of our young chefs and to Bidfood for their unwavering commitment to the World Chefs Tour Against Hunger. The University of Johannesburg for giving us a home in their precinct. Your support has made a lasting difference in the lives of many. To all our partners and sponsors, SA Chefs is where it is because of your belief and support of this noble organisation.

As we look to the future, the values of SA Chefs remain unwavering: passion, excellence, and a deep commitment to our community. Together, we will continue to push the boundaries of the culinary arts and ensure that South African cuisine earns its rightful place on the world stage. In partnership with the University of Johannesburg, we've been conducting research on nutrition—an effort closely aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in ending hunger, tackling food insecurity, and improving community nutrition with Dr Hema Kesa. Additionally, our collaboration with the Department of Tourism on their gastronomic tourism project highlights our dedication to promoting the rich heritage of South Africa's indigenous cuisine and supporting destination marketing strategies.

Tonight, I urge each of you to reflect on one crucial challenge: the current skills shortage in our sector. This is more than just a call to action—it is a critical need. Let us work together to find solutions, collaborate meaningfully, and ensure the future of our culinary industry is as vibrant as ever.

Gratitude, respect, and pride—these three words perfectly capture how I feel about the incredible people who make up the tourism and hospitality industry in our country, and what this Golden Jubilee truly means to me.

Let us unite and toil together.

Ladies & gentleman,
Here's to the next 50 years of SA Chefs! Enjoy the evening celebrations

Thank you for listening

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Khoza".

Chef James Khoza