



**SOUTH AFRICAN
CHEFS ASSOCIATION**
EST. 1974

SA Chefs 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner 2024

President's Address

Thursday 10 October 2024
The Wanderers Club, Illovo

Chef Coo Pillay



Founding SA Chefs Member and Honorary President Manfred Muellers, Long Standing Member Chef Wolfgang Heiduck, Honorary Presidents Heinz Brunner and Stephen Billingham, Honorary Former President Martin Kobald, Immediate Former President James Khoza, SA Chefs Board of Directors, Academy of Chefs Members, SA Bakers Association Former President Dave Collier, Vice President Stuart McClarty, Esteemed Chefs, Ladies and Gentlemen, and Culinary Artisans

Before I begin, I would like to thank Guru Sanjayan Sharma for the blessing he delivered. In Hinduism, there is an adage 'Mata, Pita, Guru, Deivam' which literally translates to Mother, Father, Teacher and God. Our parents are the most important figures in our lives, a mother who gives birth to the child, thereby bringing us as a child into this world. Together with a father, our parents lay the foundation that guides us in life, teachers impart valuable knowledge through their teachings and finally to God who represents the consciousness or self-awareness or our real self.

To my mata, pita, guru and deivam, I thank you for providing me with the foundations and teachings of love, trust, understanding, and continuous learning in everyday life.

I stand before you this evening with a heart full of gratitude and humility as I accept the honor of serving as the 9th President of the SA Chefs Association.

This moment is not mine alone but a testament to the dedication, passion, and hard work of each and every one of you who make up this remarkable industry.

As we gather here, take a moment to celebrate our achievements of the past 50 years, reflect on our shortfalls and create a path of positiveness in our industry.

These recent years have tested our resilience. Driven by sustainability, technology, and changing consumer preferences, our industry has had to adapt and innovate. We must not just keep pace but lead the charge, harnessing collaboration and shared knowledge to elevate our craft.

To our members and supporters, thank you for believing in me and for your unwavering encouragement.

Your confidence in my leadership inspires me to lead with integrity and purpose. I promise to honor this trust as we move forward together.

As I step into this role, I am reminded that our association is more than just a collective of chefs; we are a family united by our love for food, culture, and creativity. Together, we possess the power to elevate our profession, advocate for our community, and inspire the next generation of culinary leaders.

I envision a future where our association not only celebrates culinary excellence but also champions inclusivity, sustainability, and innovation.

We will ensure that every voice is heard and every talent is nurtured. Let us collaborate to strengthen our ties, share our knowledge, and embrace the diversity that makes our culinary landscape so vibrant.



I pledge to uphold a commitment to embracing its historical legacy while charting a course for future transformation. I vow to advocate for SA Chefs among SA Chefs, fostering open, transparent, and effective communication.

I will strive to forge alliances within the industry, promoting progression. Central to my approach will be a dedication to member-driven initiatives and unwavering support for chefs and caterers.

Furthermore, I aim to celebrate and showcase our rich food heritage, positioning SA Chefs as the preeminent culinary authority in South Africa.

Together, we will tackle the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities waiting for us.

To my parents and family, I am eternally grateful for your love, patience and support, especially when I made the major decision to change careers. You've never questioned my decisions and have always respected what I have done and continue to do.

To my mentors Chef Shaun Munro and Chef Luke Nair, my gratitude to you for opening so many doors of opportunity for me whilst I was still a trainee. Your guidance, wisdom and words of motivation have pushed me out of my comfort zone.

To my Chef Lecturer Sean Webber and the team at the International Hotel School in Durban, thank you for the skills imparted and encouraging me to enter culinary competitions. As a young chef, one needs industry mentors and I've been lucky to have worked with many over the years. The skills, advice and wisdom I have gained from them is priceless.

I need to also acknowledge my ex colleagues who have become my family, chefs Darshan Chetty Devandra Narismulu Thank you for all you do and I am grateful for being here this evening.

One cannot be a successful chef without the support and guidance from employers and senior leaders. Thank you to leadership at Three Cities, Signature Life, Intercontinental Hotel Group, The Royal Bafokeng.

To my current work family Marriott International and Protea Hotel Wanderers, thank you for the doors of opportunities you have opened for me and being able to practice my craft and passion with all round support. You have played a massive role in helping me achieve my personal goals and for allowing me the opportunity to serving SA Chefs Association-

To Chef James Khoza, thank you for your outstanding leadership during your term. I look forward to working alongside you as you transition into the role of Immediate Former President. To our Honorary Presidents—Muellers, Brunner, Kobald, and Billingham—your guidance and support throughout this journey have been invaluable.



To you, the members of the SA Chefs Association, thank you once again for this incredible honor. I am excited to embark on this journey with all of you, and I promise to dedicate myself to serving our community with passion and purpose.

Together, we will tackle challenges and seize opportunities, strengthening our bonds, and embracing our vibrant culinary diversity. Here's to a bright future for the SA Chefs Association!

Thank you!

C. Pillay

Chef Coo Pillay