

The science – and joy – of food demonstrated

Top chef, students treat guests at newly renovated University of Pretoria facility

VAL BOJE

THE Consumer Science Department of the University of Pretoria put its expanded food laboratories to the test with a sumptuous lunch prepared by final-year students in collaboration with award-winning chef Chantel Dartnall of Mosaic restaurant.

Before the meal there was a walk-through of the gleaming renovated kitchens and test lab, which include top-of-the-range Culinary stoves and ovens, induction hobs, fridges and blast freezers, which expand the number of chef stations from 26 to 56 and provide culinary students with all the cooking and serving equipment they need.

Then it was time for chef Chantel to demonstrate preparation of a delicate foamed cauliflower cream soup, served with foie gras wrapped in Brussel sprout leaves, one of the courses served to guests including university staff and the media.

During lunch, Dr Gerrie du Rand, who heads the Food and Nutrition section of the department, explained that the improved facilities enabled the new BSc Culinary Science degree introduced this year.

The degree, which is unique to Tuks, puts students at the forefront of culinology, which combines culinary art with the expertise of food science.

Du Rand said the university, with its degree options in Food Science and Nutrition, was preparing future graduates for the challenges of an ever-changing food product market in which thousands of new products are constantly being launched.

Talks to upgrade the kitchens and labs started in 2010 with approval granted in 2014. The project started in 2015, taking 10 months to complete. Du Rand said it had been tricky for a number of reasons, including that the department was situated in a historic building and the industrial equipment had to be custom-made.

Students also had to continue with their practicals during the renovations and there were also the disruptions of national student unrest to contend with.

But, everyone stood fast, and the end result is a great modern facility which has been in service

since March and includes a sophisticated experimental kitchen where the university can pursue research projects. The expansion means more students can now be trained with skills needed to meet new demands, and the department will soon embark on income-generating projects such as courses and dining experiences for the public to enjoy.

Prof Alet Erasmus, head of the Department, highlighted that while many establishments prepared students for the food industry, what the UP Culinary Science degree offered

was an exceptional programme embedded in science and tailored to changing food trends and consumer expectations.

Food she said, was about more than satisfying hunger, but about a total experience.

Tribute was paid to Hennie Fisher, a well-known lecturer in the department whose idea it was to launch the kitchen with Thursday's event, giving students the opportunity to show off a range of skills from food preparation to hospitality, and the media the opportunity to

experience the facilities.

The lunch, with a wine pairing presented by Moses Magwaza, included Sunflower Spring, a carrot jelly and orange blossom cream decorated with tiny carrot twirls (paired with chenin blanc); the cauliflower soup (paired with pinotage); African Aromas, a delicately smoked red hartebeest meat served with Chopin potatoes and baby turnips (paired with a Cape Blend). Dessert was First Frost, a beautifully plated pear, chocolate and tonka bean arrangement, and

petit fours.

● Aside from Culinary Science, the other BSc degree focus areas are Foods: Retail Management, Hospitality Management and Clothing: Retail Management.

The closing date for next year's degree course intake is August 31. Maths is a compulsory requirement with a minimum APS score of 28 for all courses bar Culinary Science, for which Physical Science and an APS score of 30 is required.

To find out more email consumer.science@up.ac.za



Chef Chantel Dartnall from Mosaic restaurant helps students prepare lunch at the newly renovated food laboratories at the University of Pretoria.

PICTURES: THOBILE MATHONSI/ANA



From left, Hennie Fisher, Prof Alet Erasmus, Dr Gerrie du Rand and Moses Magwaza pose at the newly renovated food kitchen at the University of Pretoria.



Chef Chantel Dartnall demonstrates her culinary art.



Dessert prepared for guests at the launch.