



Chefs Shine at Hotel Oscars in Cape Town

in Accolades 162 Views

The [Southern Sun Cape Sun](#) was the glittering venue for the 'Hotel Oscars', the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge, on Saturday 3rd August 2019 when South Africa's top chefs, bakers, wine stewards and concierges were honoured with the industry's top accolades.

Concluding a busy programme of formal gala launches and intensive workshops for the candidates, the 7th annual Distell Inter Hotel Challenge reached the end of its six-month roll-out phase. 27 teams representing 34 hotels around the country lined up their finest and most promising young protégés and this year, in a new move to incorporate all aspects of the trade, concierges.

And the winners of the 2019 Challenge are:

WINE STEWARD OF THE YEAR 2019

- 1st: **Lovejoy Neshamba**, *Ellerman House* (Fleur du Cap & Scottish Leader)
- 2nd: **Brian Nyamara**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas & Spa* (Pongrácz & Scottish Leader)
- 3rd: **Matakatso Moshoeshe**, *Spier Hotel* (Nederburg & Black Bottle)

As 'Wine Steward of the Year', **Lovejoy Neshamba** will embark on a brilliant travel experience with Distell including Scotland, Deanston and Bunnahabhain. On the itinerary: Bordeaux and La Cité du Vin. London, a two day stay at the superb The Montague on the Gardens – Red Carnation while working with the 67 Pall Mall Sommelier team. In addition, Neshamba receives a bursary from Distell to attend the foundation training courses from the South African Sommeliers Association.



MOST PROMISING WINE STEWARD:

- **Mxolisi Matthew Ntsele**, *One&Only Cape Town* (Durbanville Hills & Bains Cape Mountain Whisky)

MOST UP & COMING WINE STEWARD ('THE WONGA PRIZE'):

- Joint Winners: **Mduduzi Njenjese**, *De Hoek Country Hotel* (Nederburg & Black Bottle Whisky) and **Rachel Fundiswa Philile**, *Lanzerac Hotel & Spa* (Durbanville Hills & Cruz Vodka).

EXQUISITE SERVICE:

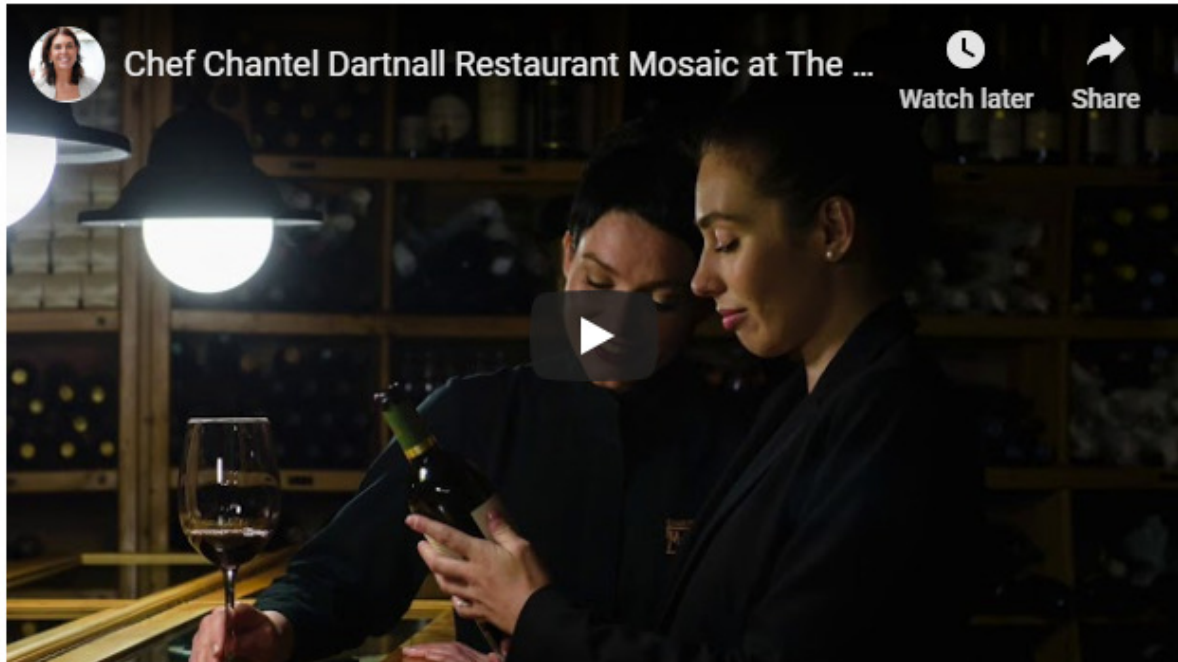
- **Jonathan Wakefield**, *The Table Bay* (Sun International) (Allesverloren & Three Ships Whisky).

CHEF OF THE YEAR 2019:

- 1st: **Johandré Grobler**, *Sun Time Square* (Sun International)
- 2nd: **Riashnie Thaver**, *Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani* (Tsogo Sun)
- 3rd: **Nicholas Freitas**, *Sandton Sun* (Tsogo Sun).

As 'Chef of the Year', **Johandré Grobler** will be jetting off for a three-week internship in September 2019 with Minor Hotels. Two weeks will be spent at [Anantara Riverside Bangkok Hotel](#) and the third week at [Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel](#), where Grobler will attend the [World Gourmet Festival](#) (2nd – 8th September) and will be cooking with more than 20 combined Michelin stars!

In addition, **Johandré Grobler** as the winning Chef and **Lovejoy Neshamba** as the Wine Steward of the Year will join Chantel Dartnall's team at [Restaurant Mosaic](#) for in-depth work shadowing. As Chantel has received the accolade of Best Woman Chef worldwide this is a generous offer benefitting the industry. Among the many accolades and awards, Restaurant Mosaic at the Orient Boutique Hotel has won the prestigious 2019 La Liste Award in Paris for the Best Wine List.



HPF 'MOST PROMISING CHEF':

- **Cathrine Chetty**, *Beverly Hills* (Tsogo Sun).

BIO-WHEAT BAKER OF THE YEAR 2019:

- 1st: **Marcony Luzoladio Diakieleka**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas and Spa*
- 2nd: **Nokwazi Gigada**, *Southern Sun Elangeni & Maharani*
- 3rd: **Ferdinand October**, *NH The Lord Charles Hotel*.

As 'Bio-Wheat Baker of the Year', **Diakieleka** received superb kitchenware from Dr Susanne Reuther of [KitchenAid Africa](#).

KITCHENAID AFRICA 'MOST PROMISING BAKER':

- A tie! **Chadwin Simmers**, *Vineyard Hotel* and **Letitia Haripersad**, *Beverly Hills*.

As 'Most Promising Bio-Wheat Baker', **Simmers** and **Haripersad** each received a two-week internship with Executive Pastry Chef Craig Hibbert and Master Baker Togara Mabharani under the auspices of Executive Chef Rudi Liebenberg at the [Belmond Mount Nelson](#).

MOST DELECTABLE STARTER:

- **Brandan Coetzee**, *Marriott Crystal Towers* – Mushroom Gyoza Exotic Denny
Mushrooms | Mushroom Ketchup | Black Garlic and Tsume sauce ~ Pongrácz NV
Rosé.

PURPLE RIBBON AWARD FOR THE BEST SA PORK DISH:

- **Johandré Grobler**, *Sun Times Square* (Sun International) – Stuffed Pork Leg |
Parsnip Purée | Micro Heritage Vegetables ~ Zonnebloem Pinotage 2017.

LANCEWOOD BEST DESSERT:

- **Lyndsey Tamson Buys**, *TAJ Cape Town* – Valrhona Chocolate Brownie |
Lancewood Lemon Curd ~ Zonnebloem Pinotage 2017.

SCANPAN EXCELLENT KITCHEN PRACTICE:

- Chef **Shane Vermaak** and Assistant Chef **Innocent Nkosi**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas and Spa*.

The duo of Chefs will each receive a one-day training programme and on-line examination to achieve the international certificate in the Highfield Qualification Level 2 Award in Food Safety & Catering, with the compliments of [The Valley Training and Hospitality Consultancy](#).

BEST MENU PRESENTATION:

- **Nancy Rowena Minords**, *The Royal Portfolio – The Silo*.

BEST COCKTAIL OF THE YEAR:

- 1st – A Tie! **Mxolisi Matthew Ntsele**, *One&Only Cape Town* (Bain's Cape Mountain Whisky | The African Sun) and **Brian Nyamara**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas & Spa* (Scottish Leader Whisky | Old Fashioned).
- 2nd – A Tie! **Parceville Africa**, *Sun Time Square* (Sun International)(Gordon's London Dry Gin | Sparkling G&T) and **Jonathan Wakefield**, *The Table Bay* (Sun International) (Three Ships Whisky | Boulevardier).

- 3rd – A Tie! **Mduduzi Njenjese**, *De Hoek Country Hotel* (Black Bottle Whisky | 'Ti-Punch Twist') and **Lovejoy Neshamba**, *Ellerman House* (Scottish Leader | Inkungu Emanzini Mist on the Water).

BEST FOOD & WINE PAIRING:

- **STARTER:** A TIE! **Graeme White** and **Sandi Notwala**, *Grootbos Private Nature Reserve* ~ Denny Mushroom & Lancewood Cream Cheese Tortellini | Balsamic Gel | Peanut Crumble ~ Fleur du Cap Chenin Blanc 2017, and **Lerato Monagane** and **Mduduzi Njenjese**, *De Hoek Country Hotel* ~ Denny's Mushroom Farm – Brown, White & Shimeji Mushrooms | Broad beans | Parsnip | Raspberry ~ Nederburg The Young Airhawk 2016.
- **MAIN:** **Shane Vermaak** and **Brian Nyamara**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas & Spa* ~ Brined Pork Silverside | Pork Pie | Pickled Grapes | Cabbage Purée | Denny Mushroom | Smoked Bacon Jus | Brussel Sprout Leaves ~ Pongrácz Desiderius.
- **DESSERT:** **Mongi Fana & Tafadzwa Ndlovu**, *Twelve Apostles Hotel & Spa* ~ Lancewood Mascarpone Orange Mousse | Rooibos Gel | Frozen Grapefruit ~ Nederburg The Beautiful Lady Gewürztraminer 2018.

CAPE WINE ACADEMY EXAMINATION RESULTS (Grape to Glass):

- 1st: 93% **Lovejoy Neshamba**, *Ellerman House*
- 2nd: Tie with 92% **Nambitha Joanne Ndum-Ndum**, *Southern Sun Cape Sun & SunSquare Cape Town, City Bowl* (Tsogo Sun), and **Titus Mutuvira**, *Sandton Sun* (Tsogo Sun – Gauteng Team).
- 3rd: 88% **Rachel Fundiswa Philile**, *Lanzerac Hotel & Spa*.

SHOWCOOK MAN OF THE MATCH:

- **Alfred Henry**, *Southern Sun Cape Sun*.

MENTOR OF THE YEAR 2019:

- **Jane-Therese Mulry**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas & Spa*.



As Mentor of the Year, **Jane-Therese Mulry** and partner are invited by Minor Hotels to a four-night sojourn at Royal Livingstone Victoria Falls Zambia Hotel by Anantara, along with VIP Flights by British Airways operated by Comair.

TOP 3 CONCIERGE'S LIST:

- **Sasha-Simone van Zyl**, *Grootbos Private Nature Reserve*
- **Masood Sadulla**, *Saxon Hotel, Villas & Spa*
- **Bradley Solomons**, *The Table Bay* (Sun International).

BEST TEAM:

- The TAJ Cape Town.

GENERAL MANAGER OF THE YEAR:

- **Mark Wernich**, *The TAJ Cape Town*.

The winning Concierges received exquisite diamond-studded, hand-crafted gold lapel pins, while **Mark Wernich** as the GM of the Year received engraved gold cufflinks from the [Diamond Works Institute](#). *Stunning!*

BEST TABLE DECORATION:

The theme this year was *'Shades of a Grape from the Vineyards of the Cape'*. 1st, 2nd, 3rd in each category:

- **Most Elegant:** The President Hotel | Beverly Hills | Spier Hotel.
- **Best Interpretation of the Brief:** Grootbos Private Nature Reserve | Twelve Apostles Hotel | SpaRadisson Blu Waterfront.
- **The Table You Would Most Wish to Dine At:** The Table Bay Hotel | TAJ Cape Town | Tsogo Sun Cape Sun & Sun Square.

Inspirational and meaningful prizes for the various category winners included generous developmental bursaries from the Cape Wine Academy, the Sommeliers Academy for a one on one masterclass with Jean-Vincent Ridon on an international level, The Hospitality Property Fund valued at R30 000 and an on-line International Hotel School course, all magnificent opportunities to give a leg up in their chosen career!

Highly desirable Scanpan cookware and Global Knives from AL&CD Ashley, hugely generous cash prizes from South African Pork, Lancewood and Avanti Coffee, books from Penguin Random House, Platter's Wine Guide and an invitation to their special 40th edition launch! Plus delectable Von Geusau chocolates of course, and more, including star Instagram posts during the 'Grape to Glass' with MLT Corp, awarded to Radisson Blu Waterfront Wine Steward **Solomon Banda**.

About the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge

The primary objective of the Challenge is to create and sustain a strong national base of top quality chefs, bakers, wine stewards and concierges. In every true sense of the phrase a programme of recognition and rewarding excellence. The hotel industry offers superb opportunities for ongoing education and ultimately career growth.

*"It is useful to take a step back," said **Annette Kesler**, the Challenge concept creator from [Showcookcom](#). "When we began the Challenge in 2013 the enthusiasm was there, but the skills needed a helping hand. Today, I'm happy to say that these skills are thriving so with the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge we are perfectly placed to move ahead in the timing and positioning of young chefs and wine stewards to be able to meet the needs of the coming years for a veritable explosion of tourism in South Africa."*

Addressing guests prior to the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge award announcement ceremony, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Opportunities and Asset Management, Alderman **James Vos** said; *"I am excited about the future of tourism in our city. Our focus will be to facilitate sustainable job creation, to help create economic opportunities which lead to new jobs and to put in place measures to ensure long-term growth. To achieve these goals, we have developed various strategies to attract more visitors to Cape Town; for them to stay longer and to spend more in the destination. Over the last decade, the sector has annually contributed between 2% and 3.5% to the local economy. Currently, the tourism economy in Cape Town sustains around 300 000 jobs in total, making it the sector with the highest growth and employment potential."*

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, South Africa has the largest tourism economy in Africa. Travel and tourism in South Africa contributed 1,5 million jobs and R425,8 billion to the economy in 2018, representing 8,6% of all economic activity in the country.

"The commitment of the hotels themselves to invest heavily in training, upskilling and expanding their staff's capabilities is pivotal in delivering superlative service," said **Chania Morritt-Smith**, Managing Editor at Showcookcom.

"Although there is an air of friendly competitiveness, one of the important outcomes of the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge is the coming together of the hotel industry in South Africa. Individuals and teams who would ordinarily see each other as competition, join forces in the name of collaborative mentorship, generously sharing their knowledge, skills and venues."

"A prime example is the Belmond Mount Nelson offering an internship for the 'Most Promising Bio-Wheat Baker' – a meaningful gesture for the good of the industry as a whole. British Airways operated by Comair has made this travel possible."

"Education is the key in this industry," said Niël Groenewald, Managing Director: Brands, Estates & Supply chain, Libertas Vineyards & Estates. "Brands such as Distell believe we have a responsibility to train rigorously in all aspects of our business to ultimately ensure top quality service delivery. For us, this includes exposing our up and coming sommeliers to the international market and industry."

"It is interesting to note," Niël continued, "that this year we celebrate 360 years of winemaking in South Africa – and international interest in our local wine industry is growing. I believe South African wine has assumed a new level of quality and a differentiated and distinctive voice."

"Many of those who have been following the progress of the industry over the years have remarked on the visible impact of the extensive innovation in wine-growing and winemaking. This has certainly translated into greater confidence amongst wine producers, who are now more than readily expressing what is uniquely South African in their wines."

"Wines of South Africa (WOSA) charts a positive growth in the overall value of South African wine exports in the Export Report 2018. It states that a 4% increase in value to R9.06 billion reflects the positive sentiments towards South African wine in international markets despite the 6% decrease in volume to 420.2 million litres of wine sold internationally. The value of packaged wine increased by 3% and that of bulk wine by a respectable 7%."

Exposure to the international hospitality industry is an important ingredient to the Challenge as the top candidates in both the chef and wine stewards categories are flown overseas for an intensive mentorship experience with some of the most famous international names and venues in the world.

"This initiative is what the South African hospitality industry needs," commented Ashleigh Christie, Regional HR Director – Africa Minor Hotels. "There is so much undiscovered talent out there, all waiting for the chance to shine! We actively want to be a part of the process that finds and grows our new talent for tomorrow's hospitality industry. Those of us in the industry should all strive to play a role."

Concept creators, managers, organisers and drivers behind South Africa's only inter-hotel mentorship challenge, Annette Kesler and Chania Morrith-Smith believe that their job is to bring the wealth of hospitality industry talent we have in this country together and provide a platform for learning and skills exchange. Their company Showcook.com dedicates itself completely to this inspiring goal.

"We have a responsibility to ensure South Africa's hospitality stars are found and nurtured right here on our soil," said Annette Kesler. "That's what the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge has at its heart. Chania and I can't make this happen unless the hotels themselves stand alongside us"

"It's a truly collaborative project. Securing the future health and success of tourism is the goal," concluded Chania Morrith-Smith.