



# CTICC launches Distell Inter Hotel Challenge in style

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*CTICC CEO Julie-May Ellingson with the CTICC candidates and mentors for the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge (from left to right): Silungile Moyakhe (Commis Chef), Marco Marongiu (Pastry Sous Chef), Tracy Mkhize (General Manager: Operations - Food & Beverage); Ian Alexander (Beverage Manager), Jamie Forknall (Beverage Floor Supervisor); Julie-May Ellingson (CEO), Roberto De Carvalho (Executive Chef).*

It was the first time the CTICC hosted the launch having been a participant in the prestigious competition for the past three years. The Challenge pits promising chefs and wine stewards from the country's most prestigious hotels and venues against each other. The launch banquet allows for a collaborative food and beverage effort, with Executive Chefs from the participating hotels working together to serve a five-course, haute cuisine menu.

In her opening speech CTICC Chief Executive Officer, **Julie-May Ellingson** commended CTICC Executive Chef **Roberto De Carvalho** and his team for the high standards they maintain in the CTICC's food and beverage offering.



*CTICC CEO Julie-May Ellingson welcoming guests at the launch of the Distel Inter Hotel Challenge.*

“The CTICC hosts an average of 500 conferences, banquets, meetings, matric balls, weddings, exhibitions, trade fairs and other events. What many people don't know is that the CTICC caters all events. Whether it's snacks and treats for 1 500 excited children watching the Peppa Pig Live! show or a water-wise menu for the Cape Town International Jazz Festival, Roberto and his team have to know the complete range of cooking styles. I therefore have to commend Roberto for what they pull off every day,” said Ellingson.

De Carvalho, who prepared the main course of slow-cooked beef short rib with crisp smoked brisket tagine spheres, coordinated the meal alongside Executive Chefs from the Cape Grace, The Westin, One&Only Cape Town, NH Lord Nelson, The Table Bay Hotel and The Silo.

“It was an honour to show the chefs how we do things here at the CTICC,” said De Carvalho, who joined the CTICC from the One&Only Cape Town a year ago.

Sponsored by Distell, the Inter Hotel Challenge is a talent development programme combined with a cook-off competition for young food and beverage specialists. Over the next five months, candidates will be given various culinary and wine challenges and will attend intensive training workshops on subjects across a wide spectrum such as communication, nutrition, kitchen hygiene, wine & food pairing and cooking techniques which will contribute to their growth in the hospitality industry.

At the launch, the respective hotels and venues introduced their teams taking part in the Challenge. The CTICC's team consists of:

- **Marco Marongiu**, candidate baker
- **Jamie Forknall**, candidate wine steward
- **Silungile Moyakhe**, candidate chef

"We chose the candidates whom we believe will bring the best of what the CTICC has to offer to the competition. Our candidates have shown that they have the drive, ambition and willingness to learn and those are important qualities. The Challenge offers a unique learning opportunity which will only elevate their skillset and enhance our services to clients," said De Carvalho.

The convention centre is the only purpose-built conference venue in Cape Town taking part in the competition. For Ellingson, this not only shows the high standards of the CTICC's food and beverage offering but also emphasises the key contribution the CTICC is making to job creation as well as training and development within the region's hospitality sector.

"Team CTICC will show that convention food is anything but conventional. Last year we won the Most Promising Chef, and Most Promising Wine Steward prizes. The CTICC competes in such initiatives because we pride ourselves in being a valuable training ground for young people in the industry. In 2016/17 our training investment rose to almost R3million; which is 6.4% of our total salary expenditure and amounted to 4 225 hours of training.

"I look forward to see how our team progress over the coming weeks and months. Their development can only be for the betterment of our restaurants, our hotels, our businesses and our industry."

Moyakhe, a CTICC Commis Chef, is from the Eastern Cape and originally joined the CTICC as an intern. She says she relishes the opportunity she's been given: "If I could sing to you how I feel, you would say 'repeat, repeat, repeat!' I feel overwhelmed by this opportunity of a lifetime that will help me grow in this industry. If you are here to learn, you will do your best, and if you do your best, you're already a winner."

Marongiu, the CTICC's Pastry Sous Chef, says he is both excited and nervous at the prospect of competing in the competition: "At the CTICC you're put through your paces every day, but being in a challenge such as this one and competing against your peers mean that you have to be even more diligent in your execution and presentation."

Forknall is a CTICC Beverage Floor Supervisor and holds a Diploma in Hospitality Management as well as a Wine & Spirits Certificate. He said he is up for the challenge: "My plan is to use everything I've learnt at the CTICC, to put my best forward. I would like to thank the CTICC for the opportunity. This is also great chance to experience what is happening in the industry at the moment and the programme will expose us to new trends and see the level of service offered by hotels."

Started by **Annette Kesler**, the doyenne of South Africa food writers, the Distell Inter Hotel Challenge has grown since it launched six years ago. The competition is now run by Kesler and **Chania Morrirt-Smith** under the banner of the food and wine portal [Showcook.com](http://Showcook.com).

Morrirt-Smith, Managing Editor of Showcook.com said: "We had a more imaginative approach, offering more than simply another cookery competition. The Challenge is life-enhancing and in many cases life-changing. It is vital for the candidates to firstly have inspiration then hands-on experience and mentorship over a period of time. They will be taken on a full journey and we are providing them with the map. The crucial thing is to have the right approach to cooking and service that treat both with understanding and respect. Aside from our unique approach we also make sure that the prizes offered are always in context, career advancing, providing a broader, more worldly experience."

The final cook-off challenge will take place in June 2018 culminating in a Black Tie Gala Awards Dinner on 4 August 2018.