

Local lady farmer to supply fresh produce to The Maslow

As part of its promise to help build sustainable communities through supporting small enterprise development, Sun International's The Maslow has partnered with Gugu Mlipha, founder of Gugu & Daughters Farming near Walkerville in Gauteng to provide vegetables and other fresh produce for use in the hotel's kitchens...

The pioneering farmer will also be growing specific plants and Asian ingredients at the request of The Maslow's new Executive Chef, Jason Millar, to support the hotel's Lacuna Bistro's new menu. Mlipha has already spent considerable time with Chef Millar to understand what sort of vegetable cuts are required to ensure optimal consistency and quality in line with his requirements.

As part of the initiative, TEP will provide additional training, mentorship and developmental initiatives to the business, aligned with The Maslow's commitment to the sustainability of the project.



Energy, commitment and passion

Executive Chef Jason Millar said: "From the moment we met Gugu, we were impressed by her energy, commitment and passion for her work. Her willingness to explore growing new vegetable and fruit varieties to meet our needs is inspiring and shows her commitment to service excellence, and continually growing and diversifying her business. We are immensely proud to be part of contributing to the continued growth of Gugu's Farm.

Mlipha's story is an inspirational one of a woman's determination to rise above circumstance and pursue her dreams. From a humble street hawker in KwaZulu-Natal, she has through sheer hard work and commitment, grown to become trusted supplier of quality fruit and vegetables to one of South Africa's largest supermarket chains, a large East Rand hotel, and other companies. She provides a value-added service and also has a refrigerated truck to assist with deliveries to her customers.

She started her business, located 55kms from The Maslow in Walkerville, in 2007. She hires unemployed people from the nearby informal settlement to tend to her vegetables and fruit which grow on various surrounding plots of land which has taken on lease.

Although she doesn't have any formal qualifications, she has an innate talent for growing and an urge to get out there daily to nurture her plants.

"It was my love for the soil and for watching things grow that got me going, and it is what keeps me going," said Mlipha.

Travel to the US

Recently, she was given the opportunity to travel to the US by the United States Consulate to represent South Africa in the African Women Entrepreneur Programme. Keen to upskill her own people, she also recently sent one of her employees to Cape Town to attend training.

An award-winning farmer, she won the award for Top Young Entrepreneur of the Year in Agro Processing in 2010 from the department of Agriculture.

Gugu & Daughters Farming's contract with The Maslow has kicked off. To start, Mlipha will be delivering an average of 200kg of fresh produce, cut to the hotel's requirements, weekly. This equates to around 30% of the hotel's fresh vegetable

and fruit requirements.

According to The Maslow's GM, Johann Scheepers, the partnership with Gugu & Daughters Farming not only demonstrates the hotel's commitment to local enterprise development and community building, but is also aligned with its goals to promote meaningful and sustainable change in its supply chain.

"Under Sun International's revised Code of Practice, The Maslow is working to ensure that 80% of products and services procured are from small, empowered, black-owned enterprises. Upskilling and nurturing BBBEE providers in our supply chain will be emphasised to ensure sustainability," said Scheepers.

He concluded: "From the outset, we have recognised that The Maslow's success and sustainability depends not only depends on our ability to constantly deliver premium services and facilities, but also on our ability to help build and maintain a sustainable community.

"Our partnership with Gugu's Farm shows our commitment to building a sustainable community and contributing to the local economy. Aligned with this commitment, and our promise to our customers to deliver only the freshest, quality, locally sourced produce, we endeavour wherever possible to work with local suppliers in support of small enterprise development.

"Gugu's Farm has an exceptional reputation for delivering quality produce and value-adding services. We look forward to working with Gugu's Farm for many years to come."

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