

Celebrating superwomen in the restaurant industry

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The Restaurant Collective, founded by Natasha Sideris, founder and CEO of Tashas Group, and Grace Harding, CEO of Ocean Basket, is celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March to highlight the contribution South African women are making to the SA and International restaurant industry. Like most societies, only 26% of leaders are women and the higher up the corporate ladder, the fewer are women with only 23% being at a director level, (Source: catalyst.org/research/women-in-management) and the hospitality industry is only now starting to see women entering the boardroom.

The Restaurant Collective is about uplifting the restaurant industry, coaching future leaders, enhancing skills needed to run successful restaurants. It's about sharing and standing together. Although they do lobby when necessary – they find true impact when focussing on building. The South African industry employs over 600,000 people in 30,000+ restaurants and 34,000+ taverns. Covid-19 changed the industry drastically, but as the sector collapsed, the strength and support of collaborating became stronger than ever before. That's how The Restaurant Collective, a non-profit company was born in 2020, demonstrating how an industry stands together with one voice.

Women are driving change in the sit-down restaurant industry. Three of South Africa's most loved restaurant brands are headed up by women: Val Nichas – Spur, Natasha Sideris – Tashas, and Grace Harding – Ocean Basket. We are super proud of Natasha who was recently included in the Caterer Middle East list for 50 of the most inspirational women in food and beverage.

How women approach business:

Natasha Sideris - *An inspiration in F&B*

Founder & CEO, Tashas Group



While I hate to stereotype, I feel that women are hard workers, effective communicators and have incredibly high standards. They also seem to be passionate about inspiring other women and seeing others succeed. Looking at the Tashas Group head office team says it all. The majority are young women in senior positions. This hasn't been done by design. I believe that it is about finding the best person for the job.

I am passionate about nurturing talent and upskilling women in all areas of the business. Many of the restaurant managers throughout the group are women, including the culinary director of the group.

Grace Harding - *We make it happen*

CEO of Ocean Basket



The founder of Ocean Basket, Fats Lazarides, decided that it was time for a female touch. Inspired by the dynamism and passion of his mother, he brought a woman into a man's world. We drive transformation in a holistic way – 360 vision. The integration of love, fairness, and fierce determination dance in harmony, and that is how results are attained. Like everything in life, it's about creating a climate of tolerance and inclusivity – embracing people from all walks of life, with disabilities and disregarding the stereotypes created. Women can see the child crying, pick up the paper off the floor, care deeply about the food in a pan, and call out poor performance.

Val Nichas - *Recipe for fulfillment: Listen, lead and respect*

Director and group CEO of Spur Corporation



Women continue to play a significant role in society, the difference is that we see them more visible in business today. In the franchise restaurant business, the acceleration of female leaders as restaurant operators is evident. With the trading environment shifting with more focus on people and purpose, leaders are required to demonstrate skills such as empathy, humility and increased communication and women are well poised for this. Over the past year, we have seen some dramatic and instrumental changes to our board of directors at Spur Corporation, and we are now have a 50% female main board and 50% female exco team.

The common denominator between these three brands is that new leaders brought more women into the boardroom which has opened up opportunities for growth. The “old boys club” has been replaced by driving results in a “human inclusive way”.

The Restaurant Collective will be launching a mentor programme for women in the restaurant industry. All applicants must

be existing managers or owners of sit-down restaurants and mentees will need to be registered with TRC (membership is free). Click here to join or email info@therestaurantcollective.co.za for more information.

The programme is expected to launch in time for National Women's Day on 9 August 2022.

For more information on The Restaurant Collective go to: www.therestaurantcollective.co.za.

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