

# Brewing a bright future in craft beer

By  Lauren Hartzenberg

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At just 27 years old, Cape Town native Rochelle Dunlop is already an award-winning beer brewer.



Rochelle Dunlop, head brewer, Afro Caribbean Brewing Company

Heading up microbrewery Afro Caribbean Brewing Company (ACBC) in Kenilworth, Cape Town, Dunlop's Space Llama double IPA beat hundreds of entries at the [2021 African Beer Cup](#) to nab the title of Best Beer in Africa.

Dunlop worked on the recipe development for the winning beer for three years, about as long as she's been working in craft beer in total.

Her career journey in the industry began when she took a job as a waitress at Banana Jam Cafe, the popular restaurant located below the ACBC brewpub – both owned by Greg Casey.

After developing a passion for beer brewing, Casey launched ACBC and its enticing selection of beers became a drawcard for the Banana Jam restaurant, where customers flocked to try the signature IPAs and limited-edition releases.

Casey was keen to share the beer knowledge he'd built up with an enthusiastic learner, and Dunlop had harboured an interest in beer. And so, her days off from waitressing were soon spent at the ACBC

brewery, where Casey taught her the science and art of beer brewing.



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It's this balance of art and science behind the brewing process that holds appeal for Dunlop. "It's creative but it also requires quite a lot of concentration, thought and planning - it's the best of both worlds really," she said during a sit-down interview with *Bizcommunity*.

Candidly, she pointed out that the job is far from glamorous. "It wasn't what I thought it was going to be at all. We clean a *lot* and I look at stuff at a molecular level. It's very pedantic and meticulous; you have to be so sterile while working otherwise you could lose your entire batch."



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## Women in beer

As head brewer at ACBC, Dunlop relishes the creativity and freedom afforded to her in her role.

While women brewers are still a minority in the industry, Dunlop said she's found the local craft beer community to be welcoming and accepting. "There are guys in the industry, like JC [Steyn] from Devil's Peak, who I can reach out to at any time of the day or night and he's always willing to help me out."

She pointed out that more women are joining the world of beer, as more women are drinking beer and are being targeted now by beer brands whose advertising have become more inclusive.



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The spirit of community in SA's craft beer industry has heightened during the pandemic, Dunlop said, with brewers rallying together to lend a hand (or some cans), as they've attempted to navigate their way through four alcohol bans.

This craft community is among the top reasons Dunlop listed when asked why she's excited about her line of work. "The people are amazing. And at the moment the industry is still quite small so we all know each other."

Another reason is the sheer variety of the craft beer offering. "It's so creative and everyone's minds work so differently, so you never know what people are going to come up with next.

"The industry is constantly changing and evolving – there's new styles of beer being developed, along with new technology. The more I learn the more I realise I have so much more to learn."

## ABOUT LAUREN HARTZENBERG

Managing editor and retail editor at Bizcommunity.com Cape Town apologist. Dog mom. Get in touch: [lauren@bizcommunity.com](mailto:lauren@bizcommunity.com)

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