

# When food runs in the family, old school comes with a twist

 By Cari van Wyk

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Maximillien Restaurant on Nelson Mandela Square recently appointed Chef Sylvester Nair as their new executive chef. Chef Sylvester, who hails from Durban, has dedicated his life to the love of food and tallied up a perfect résumé, having completed his studies at the Culinary Academy at Backsberg Wine Estate before working at several of South Africa's leading restaurants. A designer of flavours and composer of tastes, he has been in the kitchen since the age of nine, mastering the craft of creating delicacies to relish with his father - respected, internationally renowned chef Luke Nair.



■ **Why did you choose to become a chef? What inspires you?**

**Sylvester Nair:** My father inspired me and secondly the adrenaline rush inspires me more. The ability to be creative and making people happy through food.

■ **What are some of the biggest challenges you faced?**

**Nair:** Working with much older people (they have a certain mindset, very set in not trying something new) as well as unskilled people.

■ **What has your journey as a chef been like and what has been the highlight of your career so far?**

**Nair:** It has not been smooth sailing due to being in senior positions at a young age. I was exec chef at 19. The pinnacle point in my career so far was having a restaurant and being able to expose myself through food. The highest level in my life, at the moment, would be my current position at Maximillien. I have a huge responsibility to take on in a reputable establishment.

■ **Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

**Nair:** Still within the Legacy group

■ **What motivates you?**

**Nair:** My staff – when they show me initiative and that they want to learn. I am willing to teach others every day.

▣ ***What can we expect for Maximillien Restaurant's new menu?***

**Nair:** Old school Novel cuisine with a modern twist

▣ ***What's your favourite dish?***

**Nair:** My mother's Kebab chutney and Roti

▣ ***Words you live by?***

**Nair:** We learn everyday

▣ ***Words of advice for aspiring young chefs?***

**Nair:** Handshake of the host determines the taste of the roast - Ozzy Nel

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Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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