

New beverage brand Bissap inspired by flavours of West Africa

SA food startup Local Village Foods is set to launch a new beverage brand based on the traditional West African drink bissap. The goal was to create a commercial iteration of the beverage to be bottled and made available in Southern Africa, where it's previously only been consumed at the family gatherings of Africa's diaspora.



The launch of the Bissap brand marks the expansion of Local Village Foods - broadening its range of African-inspired ingredients and food products to now include beverages.

Local Village Foods was started in 2016 by SA entrepreneur Sipamandla Manqele, who had a vision to bring local African flavours to the global banquet table. Her appreciation for the diversity of Africa's people and the sheer variety of flavours the continent has to offer - including its unique grains, fruits, vegetables and plants - led her to launch her own business, which prides itself on being "boldly Afrocentric".

Local Village Foods packages and distributes a wide selection of African ingredients from all corners of the continent. Its range includes teff grain from the horn of Africa to tiger nuts from West Africa and the Southern African staple sorghum flour.



Ethical sourcing, community upliftment

Bissap is a drink made from the species of the hibiscus flower known as the Roselle, which grows in many parts of the world and is particularly prominent in the Caribbean, West and East Africa. The Roselle that's cultivated for each can of Bissap is grown by small-scale farmers in the Dodoma region of Tanzania.

Manqele works closely with the Dodoma Women in Agriculture and Business Initiatives (Dwabi) to create sustainable opportunities for the female farmers she sources produce from. The Roselle is harvested for a brief period annually before being dried, stored and packaged, and then travels roughly 4,000km to the local startup's processing plant to be made into the Bissap beverage.



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Impact sourcing is a core tenet of the Local Village Foods business. "We source our produce from many nations and often times it comes from small villages, harvested by small-scale farmers. This allows us to put money back into the communities many of us emerged from and empower them to sustain themselves through that which has always been the cornerstone of our societies, the land," Manqele explains.

Manqele says that through exalting Africa's many culinary cultures, "we will begin to grow closer as nations and enjoy previously unshared experiences with our neighbours".

Local Village Foods will soon be adding healthy snack bars and other new products to its range, and the Bissap beverage line will be available in stores soon.

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