

LIFE



Writer's charming sociopath not for squeamish

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CHOWING DOWN: Yvonne Chaka Chaka and her friend Thandi Swartbooi sample the food at the launch of Mama Chaka's Kitchen in Kraaifontein.

PICTURES: TRACEY ADAMS

SOUTH African pop legend Yvonne Chaka Chaka has been feeding the nation's soul with her music for decades, now she's feeding its people with ready-made meals.

Chaka Chaka is known for her distinctive alto voice. With a music career spanning nearly three decades, her hit songs *Umqombothi* (African beer) and *Thank You Mister DJ* still get people grooving on dance floors across the world.

Dubbed the "Princess of Africa", Chaka Chaka is also celebrated for using her powerful voice to draw attention to causes that are changing the lives of millions. Though her songs *I Cry for Freedom* and *Motherland*, Chaka Chaka was instrumental in creating awareness around the world about what was happening in South Africa. Her dedication to humanitarian work also earned her the respect of Nelson Mandela, who was a fan of her music, and she currently serves as an ambassador for the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund. She recently released her 22nd album, *Amazing Man*, dedicated to Mandela.

Her accolades include being Goodwill Ambassador for Unicef and an ambassador for the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership. She does work through her charity, Princess of Africa Foundation, and in 2012 was the first African woman to receive the annual World Economic Forum's Crystal Award. This is given to successful artists who have used their art to improve the state of the world.

Now Chaka Chaka is on a mission to use her influence to feed the nation through her Mama Chaka kiosks, from which franchisees will sell affordable, nutritious meals in the townships.

Done through a partnership with Ecom Food Concepts, the first Mama Chaka's kiosk opened its doors at the Gugulethu public yesterday. Other kiosks are in Khayelitsha, Langa and Kraaifontein.

We met Chaka Chaka at the Mama Chaka's supply kitchen in Kraaifontein last week. This is where the meals are cooked and individually packaged in microwave-friendly plastic containers before being distributed to the kiosks. I tried the brown tripe stew. The tripe was soft and the broth mildly seasoned. A bonus is

Singer feeds stomachs as well as souls

Yvonne Chaka Chaka is helping empower women and provide healthy meals in townships with her Mama Chaka's franchise, writes **Nontando Mposo**

that it's not as oily as the tripe stew sold on the side of the road in most townships, although I could have done with more spices for more flavour. But that is my personal taste.

Chaka Chaka's favourite meal is the pap and liver. "There are mamas in the townships who are not working. By creating jobs and the opportunity to run a franchise we hope to change that situation too," she says.

The Mama Chaka's menu consists of her favourite traditional foods such as pap and samp, which she includes in her everyday cooking, she says.

"It's what I grew up eating and still eat every day," she says.

She explains that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the way to go for people to take ownership of

their financial situations. "A lot of people are unemployed. The Mama Chaka's will now give women an opportunity to put food on the table and to be able to take their children to school," she says.

Chaka Chaka says she approved the menu only after she was sure that the food wouldn't poison the public. It will be changed every six months.

Speaking at the launch, sports science professor Tim Noakes gave Mama Chaka's menu a thumbs-up. Noakes advocates a high fat, low-carbohydrate diet, called the Banting Diet.

He says that more people should include animal organs in their daily diet as these are affordable, healthy and nutrient-dense. "It's the most nutritious food. More people, especially poor people, should be eating this type of food to maximise their



SERVICE WITH A SMILE: Belinda Mxesi and Yvonne Chaka Chaka assist Thembiliko Mnapu with a meal at her Gugulethu franchise. Below left: Mxesi with Professor Tim Noakes and Yvonne Chaka Chaka.



potential, instead of carbohydrates such as bread," he says.

Noakes enjoyed a helping of the tripe, but gave the pap (a carbohydrate) a miss. "Eating animal organs has the potential to make a phenomenal change to the lives and health of South Africans," he said.

As Chaka Chaka is a big advocate of women's empowerment, the Mama Chaka franchise is only offered to women.

To qualify, the franchisee has to own the property where the kiosk will be based. Each kiosk is painted bright yellow and black and is emblazoned with Chaka Chaka's smiling face. It comes with a fridge, microwave and other essential basics.

The franchisee must have a clean credit record, among other things, and a start-up fee of R2 000 includes a number of meals for her to sell.

Gugulethu franchisee Belinda Mxesi, 31, says starting a business is scary but she is ready for the challenge. "I decided to take a big risk for success. I was unemployed for a year and it's time to start earning money," she says.

Her kiosk is opposite a busy braai spot, Mzoli's Meat, but she is not intimidated

by its success. "He (businessman Mzoli Ngcawuzele) has his own customers and I will have mine who will go for what I have on offer," says Mxesi.

Dennis Finch of Ecom Food Concepts explains that they are planning to open at least five kiosks a month across the Western Cape, before taking the Mama Chaka's concept nationwide next year.

Meals are served with either pap or samp and cost about R23 each.

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