

Celebrating growth and innovation: Shoprite Group awards best suppliers of 2024

Comessa Food Services and Pasta & Me were among the standout suppliers at the Shoprite Group's 2024 Supplier of the Year Awards, celebrating their innovation and excellence alongside a distinguished group of exceptional nominees and winners.

The awards, held this past weekend at Vergelegen Wine Estate in Somerset West, recognise the vital contributions suppliers make to the Group's continued success.

Husband and wife, Zoegdie and Bilqees Essa – initially just hoping to supply quality snacks to local schools and corporate canteens - began [Comessa Food Services](#) as a home-based business producing flavoured popcorn in 2005. A year later, they expanded their production facilities to a corner shop, adding tortilla wraps and later also traditional flatbreads to their product range.

Determined to succeed, Comessa innovated to overcome challenges by, for example, designing and building their own tortilla-press machine line, thereby establishing self-sufficient manufacturing capabilities.

In 2012, Comessa was listed in selected Checkers stores. Under the retailer's continued mentorship, they were able to successfully transition from a small business to a nationally recognised supplier that now also supplies the supermarket chain's Bakery and Simple Truth private label product ranges. Today, the company employs over 100 people, with 65% of the workforce female and more than 70% youth.

"We are truly humbled by this award and would like to thank the Shoprite Group for their trust and belief in us. It's been a hard journey, but their continued support has been a cornerstone of our success," said Bilqees Essa, Chief Executive Officer of Comessa Food Services.

[Pasta & Me](#), a 100% female-owned business founded by Aziza Parker, won the 2024 Small Supplier Award for its innovative approach to food affordability, offering a range of budget-friendly noodle meals that feed a family of four for just R20.

This affordable one-pot delight is part of Shoprite's Homegrown private label range, which showcases products from small, local suppliers

"As an SMME it is difficult to get noticed, launched and scaled at the same time, but through Homegrown this became a reality. I want to thank the Shoprite team for thinking out-of-the-box and seeing the potential of our products. We are working to bring more innovations such as this to the market soon," said Aziza Parker, Founder of Pasta & Me

The Awards evaluate finalists across 12 categories on criteria including the extent to which they had contributed towards the retailer's growth and improved earnings, their stockholding and service levels, the efficiency of their administration processes, and their support at store level.

The full list of 2024 winners are:

- **General Merchandise & Furniture:** [Palm Stationery](#)
- **Professional Suppliers:** [Scania South Africa](#) / Cobus Schoeman Architects (joint winners)
- **Fruit & Vegetable Producers:** [ZZZ](#)
- **Fresh Departments:** [Comessa Food Services](#)
- **Alcoholic Beverages:** [Meridian Wine Merchants](#)
- **Groceries:** [Kellogg's Tolaram](#)

- **Snacks & Beverages:** [Mondelez](#)
- **Perishables:** [McCain Foods](#)
- **Personal Care:** [Amka Products](#)
- **SMME:** [Pasta & Me](#)
- **Sustainability:** [Detpak SA](#)
- **Private Label & Supplier Partnerships:** [Zeta Laboratories](#)

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