

From sausage maker to globally recognised Master Butcher

Aubrey Williams, from Breidbach in King Williams Town, has been working in the meat industry for 34 years and credits his success to having a positive mindset. He is among 17 butchers from the Eastern Cape who joined the global club of certified Master Butchers when they graduated from the Shoprite Group's Master Meat Artisan Programme.

"While the programme tested my strengths, it was a valuable learning experience, which equipped me with a wealth of knowledge about working in the meat industry," he reflects.

As the only Master Butcher in King Williams Town, Aubrey wants to inspire his peers to stay determined, remain true to themselves, and always strive for excellence – an ethos that served him well through his career journey.

He started working as a Sausage Maker in 1990 at OK in Gqeberha, working himself up to Reliever Blockman at OK in King Williams Town within just two years. In 1998 his determination saw him moving on to the local Shoprite as Senior Blockman before being promoted to Meat Market Manager in 2003.

The elite Master Meat Artisan butchery learning programme, underwritten by the United Kingdom's Institute of Meat, provides participants with extensive knowledge in meat processing practices from farm to fork. To qualify, butchers are required to build a substantial portfolio of evidence that includes modules on butchery expertise, business acumen and food hygiene and safety, among others.

According to Aubrey, the programme, which he completed in 2023, also significantly enhanced his understanding of employee management and conflict resolution: "My favorite part of being a manager is encouraging employees to approach challenges with an open mind and maintain a positive attitude when interacting with customers."

The Shoprite Group is the only company in Africa to provide this exclusive and highly specialised butchery learning programme. It aims to boost the development of a scarce and sought-after skill, provide career opportunities for its employees and put its supermarkets on the map as world-class specialists in meat processing.

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