

‘All of this is from my mother’s hands’

It took Ashraf Kader four years to get a product listed with the Shoprite Group, but since listing his company’s first roti in the retailer’s KwaZulu-Natal stores 10 years ago, his business has grown thanks to his mother’s recipes, father’s motivation and Shoprite’s support.

“I was 21 when I first met with Shoprite and while they weren’t interested in our rotis for reasons which I can now appreciate, they gave me excellent advice even though they weren’t doing business with me,” explains Ashraf (35), whose business, trading as Mia’s Food Corp, is based in Durban.

He stayed in contact with the Group’s KwaZulu-Natal division over the years and in 2009, Ashraf received his first order. “It forced us to restructure and change how we did business. At the time we were making frozen rotis and the demand was for fresh rotis, so a lot had to change.”

For many years, Ashraf delivered directly to Shoprite’s stores in KwaZulu-Natal and, in 2018, Mia’s Food Corp was selected as a private label convenience supplier for rotis and naan breads to Checkers stores nationally.

The Group’s product development team assessed rotis and naan bread from about 30 different suppliers before settling on the ones supplied by Ashraf and his team. “Everyone I dealt with, from the buyers to the product development team, has been extremely supportive.”

Today Mia’s Food Corp supplies white flour roti, wholewheat roti, white flour naan and onion flavoured naan directly to the Group’s three main distribution centres in Cilmor (Cape Town), Canelands (Durban) and Centurion (Gauteng).

While Ashraf has travelled to many countries to research flat breads, he uses his mother’s tried and tested recipes. “All of this is from my mother’s hands. We use her recipes to make our rotis, naan breads, Mexican tortillas and a range of other flat breads, sauces, chutneys and related food products. I have three other siblings, but I’m the lucky one because my mother shares all her recipes with me, if it were not for the Almighty, my parents and support from my wife I would have nothing”, explains Ashraf.

Since he also started supplying to Checkers, Ashraf has employed twelve full-time staff members and will be adding another seven employees to his manufacturing facility in Durban.

This is his advice for aspiring entrepreneurs who would like to get into retail: “Be respectful and honest in your dealings. Ensure your products are of the highest quality or walk away. Understand your market, costing, rebates and never chase money. Chase perfection and success will follow.”

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CAPTION: Ashraf Kader uses his mother's recipes to make the rotis and naan bread he supplies to Checkers stores in KZN.