

Butchery training a ticket to ‘fulfillment and growth’

Butchery is a scarce skill in South Africa, and therefore the Shoprite Group annually trains some 200 people to ensure an adequate supply of talent into its many butcheries across the country.

Songezo Basela (34) completed one of the two butchery training streams offered by the Group and today heads up the butchery at Checkers Willowbridge in Durbanville. Basela grew up in Xesi near Alice in the Eastern Cape and always wondered about meat cuts when shopping at his local supermarket.

“The cuts we produced at home and those in the supermarket were very different. I was interested to know why and would at times ask the person behind the counter how they got their cuts to look like that,” explains Basela.

When he moved to Cape Town to find employment, his first job was as a driver of a minibus taxi. Following a chance meeting with someone who worked in the butchery at the Checkers Hyper in Brackenfell, Basela was reminded of his interest in meat and submitted his CV at the retailer’s nearby recruitment hub.

He was accepted into the one year butchery learnership programme, covering modules such as *Hygiene and Safety*, *Meat Processing and Production* as well as *Meat Cutting*. “I enjoyed every aspect of my training,” says Basela, who completed the learnership in 2009. He worked in various positions before being appointed Trainee Manager at Checkers Willowbridge in 2015. Eight months later he was promoted to Butchery Manager.

The father of two lives in Mfuleni and says he’ll always remain loyal to Checkers because it provides a “work environment in which one can grow and flourish. I will never leave the company because here you have the opportunity to be whatever you want to be”.

This sentiment is echoed by Lebohang Windvoel (20) from Delft who enrolled for the four-month butchery skills development programme. Initially she was not convinced it was what she really wanted, but in the course of the learnership Lebohang discovered just how much she enjoyed the work. “I no longer want to study Journalism or Political Science. I want to see where a career in butchery will take me,” she comments, adding that she plans to enroll for the one-year learnership.

“I am happy to come to work every day,” says Windvoel who works at Checkers Hyper in Parow Centre. “The busyness of the store gives me a thrill and I love interacting with new people all the time.

“I want to ultimately work in management at [Shoprite’s] Home Office [in Brackenfell], but realise I still have a long way to go before I get there. There is a lot of room for me to grow within the company. I also feel really good that I can help my mother provide for our family,” she concludes.

Skills development and job creation, especially amongst the youth, is a major priority for the Shoprite Group. During the past financial year, it created 3 175 new jobs and trained more than 5 079 unemployed youths through various programmes.

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