

This ginger beer business started in a garage - and now employs over 200 people

[Supa Ginja](#), a powder ginger beer business started in a North West garage, experienced dramatic growth during South Africa's national lockdown with several alcohol bans as well as a deal with Shoprite.

The product is a traditional ready mixed ginger beer powder that, when combined with water and allowed to ferment, turns into a unique ginger beer drink. It caught the attention of the South African homebrewing market during the Covid-19 lockdowns and has enjoyed sustained growth since.

The family business started with just three employees in a 32-square meter garage, but now has over 200 employees at its North West factory. Ten employees work exclusively on the Shoprite account, Supa Ginja's biggest corporate retail client.

"Shoprite has given us a national footprint, which created many new jobs due to more traceability and quality control requirements. We also expanded our sales and admin teams to keep up with the rising demand and incoming orders," explains CEO, Johan Pretorius.

Although South Africa's Covid-19 alcohol bans was a net positive for the company, Pretorius describes it as a "roller coaster".

"The demand for our product would spike during lockdown periods and then decline again after it was lifted, but what lockdown really did for us was to get the product's name into the market. All the profit we made during lockdown was put into marketing, and that is where we really banked on our growth."

According to Pretorius, supplying a large retailer like Shoprite requires the company to deliver multiple small orders within a short time. But the opportunities far outweigh the new challenges.

"At the moment, we are developing networks in Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Namibia as well as Zambia. We are busy with a Shoprite listing to supply the whole of Africa, and we are also in talks to manufacture a house brand ginger beer powder for all the Shoprite stores," says Pretorius.

In the Group's continued efforts to give SMMEs access to its consumer market, it has seen businesses like Supa Ginja grow from being small to full-fledged suppliers.

As drivers of growth, job creation and innovation, small and emerging suppliers are crucial to the recovery of the South African economy, and the Group will continue to capacitate and grow commercially-viable SMMEs through its newly launched [Shoprite Next Capital](#) business division.

"We want to further enhance the participation of small and emerging suppliers in our business, so Shoprite Next Capital is focussed on their specific needs and how best we can assist them. This new division will provide SMMEs with easier entry into the Group's retail market with direct access to buyers that understand their needs combined with personalised growth plans that will assist suppliers to scale up gradually," says Maude Modise, GM for Enterprise & Supplier Development at the Group.

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