

# EVENTS FIT FOR THE PRESIDENT

With more than 50 years' experience in corporate catering, Tsebo is well versed in pulling off the perfect year-end event on time and on budget. Chef Oliver talks about how Tsebo's professionalism, creativity and innovative approach boils down to the passion of its people.

Having worked in the catering and hospitality industry for more than 20 years, including 11 at Tsebo, Oliver Reddy, KZN Regional Executive Chef, has had the privilege of catering to three South African heads of state namely, President Cyril Ramaphosa and former presidents Jacob Zuma and Thabo Mbeki, as well as numerous high-profile dignitaries and delegates. What this means, as Tsebo Catering Solutions enters the festive season, is that no matter how large or small the event, chef Oliver and his team are well proficient in the preparation, design and delivery of highly successful, high-end occasions.



**CHEF OLIVER REDDY**  
KZN Regional Executive  
Chef

From sit-down, silver service executive lunches to fun themed parties and family days, meal kits and grazing tables to finger foods and roving waitrons serving bowls brimming with wholesome delights, Tsebo has every facet of the holiday season covered. "We have seen a massive increase in event requests this year," says Oliver. "We already started with year-end events in October, and it is just getting busier to the extent that 2022 will probably be the biggest and busiest event year we've had in the past three to four years."

For chef Oliver and his army of chefs, cooks, waitrons and service staff, preparation is key to achieving success while maintaining the high standards of service and innovation Tsebo is known for. "People think successful events are all about the food, but food is the easy part, it's the part we have fun with. There are so many moving parts to an event, and consequently so many things that could go wrong, it's important to plan for every eventuality to ensure that everything goes smoothly on the day," says Oliver.

Planning starts by meeting with the client to gain an understanding of their budget and expectations for their year-end function, and then offering ideas that push the envelope to achieve experiences that exceed their imaginings. From there on it is about going into the granular details such as menu planning and staffing. Will additional staff be needed for food preparation and service or can existing staff roles be extended? Can the onsite kitchen cope with the additional catering load or will food need to be prepared off-site and transported in on the day? Does the business have the necessary cutlery, crockery, tables, seating and decorations, or will these need to be hired? In this way, Tsebo ensures that their clients' existing catering service remains uninterrupted, and that preparation takes place quietly in the background without disturbing the core business.

Fortunately, with experience of many years in corporate catering, Tsebo is well skilled in pulling off the perfect year-end event on time and on budget. Chef Oliver attributes this to more than just last-minute hustle, and believes that Tsebo's professionalism, creativity and innovative approach boils down to the people it hires and retains.





“Tsebo’s unique brilliance lies in the talent of our teams. Through a caring approach that strives to continually challenge and develop employees, we are able to retain intelligent professionals, who understand the rules of engagement and hold themselves accountable for the day-to-day running of each of our units. We attract industry players who are winning in their space and are personal about providing the best of the best,” says Oliver. “I am extremely proud of the team I work with.”

This people-centred culture starts at the top and flows down to interns and trainees. “Chef Nick (Nicholas Madura, Tsebo Group Culinary Director) has taught me a lot and is a great mentor for everyone on the team. He leads by example, never loses his cool and always finds a solution to any issues that arise.” Oliver also believes in the importance of keeping abreast of international trends in the industry and recently attended a conference in Abu Dhabi, which attracted the leading players in the industry. “The biggest thing that came up this year was sustainability. We only have one planet and have to take care of it,” says Oliver. In a world where about \$1 trillion dollars a year of edible food is wasted, this includes reducing food waste and becoming more aware of the carbon footprint of the food we consume.

Tsebo prides itself on following sustainable best practices and puts enormous effort into creating and building supply chains sourced from local SMMs. There is also a drive towards recycling and using environmentally sustainable cleaning and pest control solutions. For some of its larger clients, Tsebo recycles food waste using a bokashi bin system to make compost that is then used in the clients’ kitchen gardens.

As part of a company that constantly strives to improve, create and innovate, chef Oliver believes that there is no substitute for hard work, passion and detailed planning. All of which adds up to clients being able to rest easy that every aspect of their event has been thoroughly thought through and that any challenges that arise on the day will be swiftly taken care of – resulting in the perfect year-end function.

