

Heineken South Africa celebrates their women in brewing #WomenInBeer - Part 1

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Heineken South Africa is proud of the company's diversity and inclusion policies and especially the large number of talented women in beer, who make their mark on some of South Africa's favourite brands. Let's meet some of Heineken South Africa's leading ladies.



Thandeka Nzukuma is a packaging technologist. Thandeka explains what this means; “I look after quality assurance and control for packaging process and support. That is from raw material, in-line process and full product quality. I’m currently deployed to sign-off of new suppliers for bottles and cans. Essentially, I am ensuring that the bottles meet our standards, perform in-line without causing downtimes and are safe when transported to the consumer.”

She says she loves the responsibility of implementation and governance of the effectiveness of quality and food safety systems. And, she also relishes the agility and the speed of the role, “literally every second counts when it comes to what I do. The everyday wins and losses keep me going. I am blessed to have to work in a company that continuously strives to improve involvement and growth of women in general. I work in the midst of a pool of leaders who push women to be their best but also comprehend the challenges that women are facing.”

Brewing has clearly always been in Thandeka’s blood. In fact, the woman who has had a particularly positive influence on your life would be her Gammy, MaMthethwa. “She was a fierce, strong, courageous and a woman of faith, love and hope. She was in the traditional brewing industry (homemade beers), that’s where her income came from to raise us. It didn’t matter what challenges she faced, she always woke up and showed up with presence. She was a home to every person she met and changed lives of a lot of people. She believed in me and I was the first person to go to varsity in my family, and graduate with Honours.”

Thandeka’s career highlight was the installation of the first keg filling line at her brewery. “I was responsible for set up of quality assurance framework. From new procedures, work instruction, in process set-points to ensure safe filled kegs, to

on-boarding and training of the new staff that will be stationed at the keg line on new procedures and quality assurance of Kegging process". Laughing she adds, "When the first keg came out of the filling machine, I felt like singing out loud "Waka Waka" by Shakira!"

Her favourite beer: "Heineken – heaven in glass – brewed to perfection. It's all about the esters that are dancing in there. That banana pinch just brings out the English flow.

Makgosi Booyesen is a quality lab lead at Heineken South Africa who is passionate about breaking silos in the brewing industry because she feels collaboration is a very powerful tool in executing any strategy. Makgosi says; "I see great examples of that in the daily taste sessions that I conduct with our qualified tasters on site. It is the one opportunity where people from different functions and levels come together and really talk about quality and how our consumers perceive our products. We are constantly discussing what we can do to improve, we learn from each other of course have fun."

Her career highlight was obtaining a brewing qualification through an extensive traineeship. "At the time it which is quite rare for females in the industry to have a qualification in this field as it is mostly dominated by men. Surprisingly through the traineeship I learnt that the original brewers were actually women and if you actually think about it; in our communities when we have a function it is the women who would brew the traditional beer. It was never seen as a science or art but this process has shown me that it is and we must value it".

"In my personal life my mother has been quite influential because she taught me that you should not let the world change you, that you should always be your authentic self in the pursuit of any dream. In the beer industry I have been inspired by Apiwe Nxusani who is well known in the craft beer space. She taught me a lot about being fearless in the pursuit of what sets your soul on fire. Her key mission has been to change the craft beer space to represent more black females in the industry and she has been quite successful in doing this".

Makgosi believes things have changed in the last few decades when it comes to the exposure of women to the beer industry. "I was often in circles where women love the taste of beer but would not dare have one publicly and boldly because it was always seen as a masculine drink or they were skeptical about pursuing beer careers. But, the process of beer making involves an entire supply chain and different functions that every person, male or female can contribute to. It is also platforms like these that allow people like those of us in the industry to be known and inspire others to consider this route."

She really enjoys SOL because of its light crisp and refreshing taste and the beautiful golden colour. The slogan "Chasing the Sun" is also in line with my personality.

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