

JUDI DYER

Morgenster's MD Judi Dyer was recently awarded her Springbok Blazer at a National Culinary Team event – as a young student chef in 1984, Judi joined the Junior national culinary team and not only won two gold medals, but the overall Best Junior Chef title when competing in the Culinary Olympics. We chatted with Judi about her experience.



WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO JOIN THE NATIONAL JUNIOR CULINARY TEAM? My fellow student at Wits Technikon, Fausto Airoidi and I were ambitious and, I am sure, challenging students. We had entered the Marvello Recipe of the Year competition in our first year and did very well, so when we heard about the Culinary Olympics our first reaction was “Why not? What have we got to lose?”

TELL US ABOUT YOUR COMPETITION EXPERIENCE? Each of the Junior team members participated by preparing prescribed dishes within an hour that showcased particular disciplines in front of a live audience. We each participated twice – my two dishes were Sole Duglere with turned potatoes and the second was Chocolate Mousse with Profiteroles. I drew the short straw and ended up being the first one of the team to compete. We'd practised these dishes every day for three months but we never managed to get them done

in under an hour. On the day, I was faced with a live audience of more than 300 people, judges watching my every move and an MC who kept presenting me with a microphone to answer questions asked in German. I kept my head low, focused and managed to complete my Sole Duglere in just over 35 minutes! It was a first time experience for each of us and we supported each other tremendously; I remember that when Fausto competed he had decided to use a Kenwood mixer to whip his cream, rather than by hand (“It's the new technology!” he said) However, he forgot it in the mixer and we were all sitting in the back row, gesturing at him wildly to remind him about his cream! His head was down and he didn't notice, so his cream separated but luckily he had enough cream and time to do it again (by hand!) and presented the perfect mousse to the judges.

DO YOU HAVE ANY INTERESTING MEMORIES OF THE EXPERIENCE? One particular memory was when I got my ingredients to participate



for my Sole dish, an hour or so before I was due to start, I discovered that we had been given dressed soles. I was distraught – how was I going to compete if I could not demonstrate that I knew how to skin and prepare a sole to be filleted? I was inconsolable. As my teammates were trying to assure me that I would do just fine, I looked up and there was Billy, cycling towards me, clutching a plastic bag that contained four soles – complete with head, tail and all their skin so that I could compete as I had practised! To this day, I have no idea where he found them but he made my day, sent me in with the confidence I needed to pick up my first Gold Medal.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE PRIZEGIVING CEREMONY AND WHEN YOU FOUND OUT THAT YOU'D WON? We'd had very little sleep and it was a long ceremony that was mostly in German, but we were buoyed by our performance - between us juniors we had picked up five Gold Medals. Heinz Brunner moved closer to the group and stood beside me and suddenly started translating – I thought he had noticed that we were a little bored in not understanding what was being said. They were saying that the Junior competition had been tough, the standard had been very high and many Bronze, Silver and Gold medals had been awarded. They had a prize for the Best Junior Chef, sponsored by a Swiss Chocolate producer, who had shown tremendous attention to detail and great creativity – and that she would be presented with a special Trophy. Then they called my name and my heart stopped. I had no idea that there was an overall prize and certainly no expectation of winning it. Standing on the stage, with all the national flags behind me and hearing our National Anthem

being played was an experience that cannot be described. Later that evening, I called home to tell them the news – my father was so elated by this achievement on top of my two Gold medals – it was nearly midnight at home, but he still phoned everybody around the world that he knew of, waking them all up to share his news!

ARE THERE ANY NEW AND INTERESTING THINGS HAPPENING AT MORGENSTER? There is always something interesting happening at Morgenster – owner Giulio Bertrand is at his happiest when he is “inventing something”, as he calls it. He's Italian, but has spent the majority of his time in South Africa since he bought Morgenster in 1992. Morgenster has captured a piece of his soul and if truth be told, Morgenster is his home. Despite being well on the way to becoming a nonagenarian, he keeps us all on our toes, inspiring each of us, every day. Quality is the overarching mantra for Morgenster. We have a new restaurant on the property which is a collaboration between Giulio and his friend Giorgio Nava called 95 At Morgenster. The restaurant serves authentic Italian food from the North of Italy – it is simple food, presented well, packed with flavour and made with passion. We've recently added a Sangiovese and a Cabernet Franc to our Nu (pronounced new) range of wines, and then of course there are the Italian Collection wines which are attracting a lot of attention at the moment. All eyes are on the vineyards and orchards now as we watch the grape bunches and olive drupes setting – revealing the potential they hold for our 2016 harvest. There are of course a couple of other things in the pipeline that I can't tell you about – there is always something that we have up our sleeve!