



# SPUR STEAK RANCHES

## SERVING UP AN EXPERIENCE





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*As Chief Executive Officer, Pierre van Tonder explains, Spur's commitment to delivering customer satisfaction and its efforts to improve the lives of local communities befit a brand that has become a South African institution*

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**A**cross the business, we served 53 million meals in the financial year to June 2013,” states Chief Executive Officer, Pierre van Tonder. “That is almost one meal for every person in South Africa.” Such impressive numbers really speak for themselves and highlight just how iconic a brand Spur Steak Ranches has become in South Africa.

Spur Steak Ranches has been a part of the landscape of South Africa since its founder and executive chairman, Allen Ambor, opened the first restaurant in Newlands, Cape Town in 1967. In the 45 plus years since, Spur has grown into an internationally recognised brand with a portfolio of over 237 local and 28 international restaurants. Spur Corporation meanwhile has expanded in that time to the point where it boasts two further sit-down family restaurant chains, Panarottis Pizza Pasta and John Dory’s Fish Grill Sushi, and the fast food convenience chain, Captain DoRegos.

At home on the African continent business in recent years has been very kind to Spur. Indeed, if you look at many of the major developing cities in countries such as Kenya, Tanzania and Namibia, they all have in common the fact that new Spur Corporation restaurants have either recently opened or are in the process of being introduced. At the same time plans are afoot for the business to enter other key markets including Ghana, Angola and Mozambique.

Doing business in Africa is admittedly a logistical challenge, however the company is not one to balk at the slow and steady





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approach to expansion. This way of thinking has also characterised its international growth over the last several years. In January 2013, a new look Spur was unveiled to the UK, a move that has been well received, while in Australia, where growth has been somewhat more conservative, the company does still plan to open at least two new franchised branches in Perth in 2014.

As evidenced in the past with other major restaurant brands, in taking a business and making it multi-national, one does run the



The Spur Foundation working in the community

risk of losing part of one's identity in the process. To date this has not been the case with Spur.

"We have and will always be a family orientated business, and looking after families from grandparents to grandchildren will always be a big part of what we do," van Tonder explains. "In addition to that we consistently look

to deliver value for money. We know as well as anyone else that these are difficult times for many and as such people understandably do not have money to waste. It is for this reason that we always strive to serve our

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# 1967

The year that Allen Ambor opened the first Spur restaurant

customer with more than just food, we serve them an experience.”

The experience that van Tonder speaks of begins when the customer enters the restaurant to the moment they leave and incorporates everything from the inclusion of children’s facilities at its locations to the menu itself, with the company making a concerted effort to introduce special promotions for its customers. “In South Africa and several other countries we have introduced the Monday Night Burger Night, the response to which has been phenomenal,” van Tonder says, “while the response to our Breakfast Offering has seen breakfast meals going from 0.4 percent of all meals served to 14 percent.”

Of course the sometimes unsung heroes of a business like Spur and the men and women who make up its staff. Each of these individuals is supported from their first day as part of the Spur team by a comprehensive training programme led by the company’s two training centres, one in Cape Town and the other in Johannesburg.

Extensive training is provided for everyone from new waiters, waitresses and cooks, to franchise managers. “The latter’s training,” van Tonder highlights, “begins with several months of learning everything there is to



The Spur Foundation’s emphasis is on nourishing and nurturing children

do with running a franchise, from opening up in the morning to closing down at night. It then extends into the first weeks of the restaurant being opened where a team will be on hand to train both the back and front of house staff.”

Around two years ago Spur Corporation launched a ground breaking initiative called the Spur Training Academy. It is through this that the company takes disadvantaged individuals who display particular skills or potential and puts them through a six month

training and apprenticeship programme. Plans are also in progress for the construction of two test kitchens at the company’s training facilities and what van Tonder describes as an even more audacious goal of creating a twelve month store ownership apprenticeship programme. “We have a saying, which is ‘for the love of food’, and it is that which we want to instil in all those people who attend our training courses or one day venture into our test kitchens.”

On 18 July 2012, Mandela Day, Spur launched an initiative, with the backing of

“AROUND TWO YEARS AGO SPUR CORPORATION LAUNCHED A GROUND BREAKING INITIATIVE CALLED THE SPUR TRAINING ACADEMY”



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R670,000 from its board of directors, that may well go on to define the legacy the business leaves behind for decades to come. I am referring to The Spur Foundation. Under the strapline ‘Nourish, Nurture, Now!’ the primary goal of The Spur Foundation is to uplift and improve the lives of South Africa’s families, with a special emphasis on nourishing and nurturing children. It looks to achieve this by supporting various initiatives that administer feeding schemes and provide basic necessities and amenities to children in impoverished communities.



“Spur as a business, and all of its restaurants, have always been heavily involved with local communities,” van Tonder enthuses, “however it was our desire to make an even bigger difference to people’s lives, and do so in a more focused and coordinated way, that led to the establishing of The Spur Foundation.”

Having first achieved tax exempt status, one of the first goals of the foundation was to identify its beneficiaries, a list of non-profit organisations that has grown in size over the last 18 months. Among the organisations benefiting from the actions of the Spur Foundation are

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Heifer International, a US based non-governmental organisation that has been supporting rural families in South Africa since 2000, and Asha Trust, which supports early childhood development in local townships.

Other beneficiaries include, the Teddy Bear Clinic, a non-profit organisation that provides assistance, support and protection to children who have been abused, Joint Aid Management (JAM), which is currently assisting around 700,000 children through its nutritional needling programme, Creating Change, which teaches



The Spur Foundation supports rural families

environmental education and sustainability through natural gardening, healthy cooking, natural building, product development and environmental awareness activities, and Reach for a Dream, an organisation that fulfils

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teams are always on the lookout for new opportunities to launch quality and pioneering dairy products, underlining our position as a leader in the dairy industry. Apart from our South African operations, the company also boasts manufacturing, sales and marketing operations in Mozambique, Botswana, Zambia and Swaziland. Parmalat SA has appointed distributors in certain other key countries on the continent to trade on our behalf. These agreements are exclusive in all cases. In collaboration with trusted distributors on the sub-Saharan continent, Parmalat forms a strong network in Southern Africa, allowing us to continuously expand and export a wide range of quality products.

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the dreams of children between the ages of three and 18 who have been diagnosed as having a life-threatening illness.

On a business level, it is Spur's goal to continue to develop in other markets, however the company is well aware that the 'golden goose', as van Tonder refers to it, will remain South Africa where the Spur Steak Ranch brand has become so iconic.

"We expect to continue growing in South Africa, both through organic growth and by adding new restaurants: that is our primary focus," van Tonder says. "One of the other goals we will look to achieve is the vertical integration of our core products. Our traditional model involves third party supply of everything that we use in our restaurants, with the exception being our proprietary recipes. Our plan is to begin working on achieving the vertical integration of core products like burgers, ribs and other meat products in the near future."

As the business continues to grow and prosper, it is van Tonder's hope that the company's social activities follow a similar path. "Our second year plan for the Spur Foundation is to bring more involvement from a restaurant level directly into its activities," he concludes. "Ultimately our aim is to get as many of our people involved in these activities as possible, thereby allowing us to continue to spread a little love to those less fortunate through what I must say is highly recommended and rewarding work." **BE**

For more information about  
Spur Steak Ranches visit:  
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