

Flight of faith pays off

 By [Gwen Watkins](#)

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This year's Unilever Food Solutions *By Invitation Only* competition, one of South African's most prestigious annual culinary competitions, was won by Petrus Madutlela, currently at the Savoy in London, in a tense cook-off at Hostex on Wednesday 16 March 2011.



Petrus Madutlela receives his cheque from Craig Elliott, executive chef, Unilever Food Solutions.

Madutlela, Unilever Food Solutions Chef of the Year 2010, went to London late last year and joined the Savoy in January 2011. As an invited competitor, he flew himself out from London to take part in the challenge.

"I am excited and delighted, especially with the award and can't wait to fly back to my wife on Friday with the prize. I would like to surprise her but I suspect that she will be getting emails and SMSes really soon," he says.

"When I enter these competitions, I go not only for the best look but also the best taste, as presentation is not everything. There were so many ideas whirling around in my head that I wanted to execute but in the space we were given, it's tight to produce but I was satisfied with my menu."

The chefs were given staple fruits, vegetables and condiments and set ingredients of:

- Knorr Tomato Pronto
- Knorr Mash Flakes
- Knorr Demi- glace
- Carte d'Or Cheesecake
- Carte d'Or Wild berry sauce
- Crayfish
- Rabbit
- Veal

- Smoked salmon
- Chorizo sausage

Madutlela adds, "I am fortunate in that I have cooked rabbit at the Savoy, which is an amazing place to work. Incredibly hard work but you don't notice it when you love it so passionately and today London is the food capital of the world - even the French come there to eat!"

Winning menu

- Starter - Smoked salmon tortellini with butter; Poached and smoky tomato spuma
- Main - pan roasted veal, rabbit cutlet, braised garlic, olive oil on mash with chorizo jus
- Dessert - Chocolate Marquise with lemon curd; Mixed berry leather with vanilla soil

"What was key was the overall excellence of all three of his entries," says Andrew Atkinson, executive chef at the Michelangelo and head judge. "Overall, the desserts were all excellent but in some entries, only the starter or the main course was good. What we were looking for was overall consistency, which is key."

The prize of R40 000 was handed over by Craig Elliott, executive chef, Unilever Food Solutions for Africa, Pakistan and the Middle East, who congratulated all the competitors for their skill in creating masterpieces in the middle of a successful, busy expo.

The other entrants were Stefano Strafella (independent consultant chef, Johannesburg), James Khoza (Sandton Sun Hotel, Johannesburg), Raymond Rundle (Mambo's Pub & Restaurant, Cape Town), Alfred Henry (Capsicum Culinary School, Cape Town) and Markus Banzinger (independent consultant chef).

ABOUT GWEN WATKINS

Gwen Watkins is a freelance writer, editor, subeditor and author. Almost 40 years of experience across industrial and commercial writing, as a reporter and PR consultant, has given her expert grounding in brand communication and native advertising. A Master NLP Practitioner, she uses these skills within the creation of copywriting, annual reports, brochures and website copy.

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