

President Hotel's new chef adds a modern approach to classic cuisine

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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The President Hotel's new chef, Phillip Alcock has nurtured and harmonised local ingredients in the hospitality industry for the last 33 years, with skills spanning fine dining to comforting classics.

Born in Bicester, England, Alcock got his first taste of the culinary industry at the age of 14 when he began washing pots in local kitchens to gaining experience in Michelin star restaurants in the south of France - to obtaining a degree in hospitality and catering.



Working with the likes of French restaurateurs, Albert Roux, Marco Pierre White and Raymond Blanc, Alcock grew in culinary strength and expertise, becoming a South African Sustainable Seafood Initiative (SASSI) trailblazer who harmonises fresh seafood with local spices to Michelin rate European cuisine.

As the new executive chef for the President Hotel, Alcock will be expanding the hotel's food offering, working alongside local farms to bring "robust flavours of seasonally sourced foods" to life and will be leading the hotel into more tapas and a la carte style menus.

We caught up with Alcock to find out what influenced the new food offerings, what his modern approach to the kitchen will be and the type of ingredients that he'll be harmonising...

What inspires your cooking, and how has this influenced the new food offering at the President Hotel?

I get my inspiration from the places I have travelled around the world and the people I have met in between; from street food in Thailand to fine dining restaurants in Europe, from my kids to the internet. At the moment, I'm focused on the classics and bringing that cuisine back in my own style at the President Hotel, along with dishes that have brought me fond memories.



▣ ***With transforming the hotel's kitchen – what was the modern approaches that you incorporated into the menu?***

We will be keeping the recipes as traditional and as simple as possible in order to allow the natural flavours of the ingredients to come through. The modern techniques come in the form of modern plating and cooking methods derived from my background in fine dining.

▣ ***Can you let us in on the types ingredients you enjoy harmonising?***

As a SASSI Trailblazer, my passion is fish. It's an art to bring simple flavours together with the delicate flavour of fish.

▣ ***Did you always want to be a chef?***

From the first day, I got a job washing pots and pans in a local kitchen at the age of 14, I fell in love with the kitchen. It's something you can't describe - night after night, sweating in the pot wash, the satisfaction I got after service completely got me hooked, I loved it, peeling carrots and potatoes, the cuts, the burns, being asked to come in on the days I was off, I don't know I couldn't say no.



Who did you look up to in the hospitality industry as you were coming into your own?

Heston Blumenthal, Marco Pierre White, Gordon Ramsey, the Roux brothers - there is so many I have either worked for or drawn inspiration from.

■ ***Is there any advice you'd like to share with those considering a career in the hospitality – especially to those looking to become chefs?***

My advice would be to enjoy every day, watch learn and never give up if you love it, it's going to be a long hard journey.

■ ***What is your favourite dish on the menu and why?***

Fish and chips... It's simple, like me.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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