

Hostex 2024 shatters 10-year visitor attendance record

Hostex, the popular showcase for the food, drink and hospitality industry, has marked a triumphant return after two years, breaking attendance records and cementing its legacy as Africa's food, drink and hospitality expo.



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Held at Sandton Convention Centre, Hostex was a resounding success, attracting a record-breaking 6,816 visitors – the highest in the last decade.

Says Mark Anderson, portfolio director for Specialised Exhibitions Montgomery, “This year's edition saw a remarkable surge in attendance, signalling not only a resurgence of the hospitality industry but also the unwavering spirit of resilience and adaptability within the sector. The vibrant atmosphere, coupled with the quality of innovative exhibits and insightful seminars, showcased the dynamism that defines the hospitality industry.”

The 6,816 attendees included a diverse mix of decision-makers and industry professionals, with nearly 200 visitors hailing from various countries across the globe.

Highlights

Sold-out hall: The event witnessed a sold-out hall, with exhibitors pulling out all the stops to create visually engaging and interactive stands.

Themed days and districts: Three theme days and six dedicated districts, including Equipment Africa, Food & Drink Africa, Tea & Coffee Africa, Contract Furnishings Africa, Technology Africa, and Sustainability Africa, provided a comprehensive showcase of the latest trends and innovations in the industry.

Seminar topics and ambassadors: Seventeen curated seminar topics, featuring five industry leaders as Hostex Ambassadors, offered valuable insights into the trends shaping the future of the hospitality sector under the themes of Taste Tomorrow, Hospitality Horizons and Design & Deliver.

Diverse offerings: From culinary trends to sustainable products and services, Hostex 2024 delivered solutions for decision-makers, allowing them to connect, source solutions, and stay ahead of industry trends.

Culinary interactions: SA Chefs brought another jam-packed programme of interactive demonstrations designed to inspire and showcase the talents of chefs to Hostex visitors, along with a selection of products and service-providers in The Skillery and Chefs Village.

National Coffee Championships: Hostex 2024 was a stage for excellence in the South African coffee scene, as the Speciality Coffee Association of Southern Africa (SCASA) proudly announced the winners of three National Coffee Championship competitions. These outstanding champions – Andre Blignault (Cup Tasters Champion), Luke Letts (Barista Champion), Jeff Stopforth (Latte Art Champion) – will be representing South Africa on the global stage, showcasing the country's prowess in the world of coffee.

Their remarkable skills and dedication were on full display at Hostex, adding an extra layer of excitement and celebration. "As South Africa's ambassadors in global coffee competitions, these champions embody the innovation and talent that the local coffee industry has to offer, reinforcing the nation's position as a force to be reckoned with in the international coffee community," says Iain Evans, Hostex ambassador and publisher of The Coffee Magazine.

Overwhelmingly positive feedback from visitors highlighted the quality of the visiting audience and the number of leads generated from the show.

Maryke Polley (Sales Manager, The Local Farmer): "It was a great show and we saw a lot of chefs and restaurant people that we were hoping to see. We were extremely busy and we've got hundreds of leads so I'm really excited to follow up on them. Everyone gave their contact details so it's really been worth it. We've got the right type of people here."

Mario van der Walt (Managing Director, FoodServ Solutions): "The show has been great. It exceeded the expectations from the previous shows we've participated in. Our last exhibition was in 2020 just before Covid and that was a phenomenal show. We had such a great response from our customers and then Covid happened so we didn't come back in 2022 show because we didn't feel the industry was in the right space. This year has definitely been well worth it. The quality of leads was phenomenal, and most of our key accounts also came through, which is unusual because they don't come to all the shows."

Carmel Rubinstein (Sales Division Manager, Hospitality Suite Hotel Supplies): "This year's Hostex has been very good. We've had a lot of our customers come by, especially high-level people from the African regions. It's been absolutely amazing because Africa is the main focus for us. And then from South Africa we've had a really good mix of lodges and hotels and larger guest houses, giving us their details, wanting us to contact them."

Visitors commented on the vibrant atmosphere and Hostex's ability to connect the industry under one roof.

Yonela Motloung (Marketing Lead for Unilever Food Solutions SA): "It is so awesome to see the hospitality industry get back to life after the trauma of Covid. It's my first time visiting Hostex and I loved the vibe. I want to give a shout out to Hostex for organising this amazing event. We cannot wait for 2026 when Hostex turns 40 – that's 40 years of impact, 40 years of creating the greatest hospitality industry that we want see, 40 years of preparing for the future. Unilever Food Solutions will be on that journey with Hostex."

Claire Johnson, Founder and Curator of Nucleo & Hostex Ambassador: "Walking into the exhibition, there was so much electricity. There was really quite an atmosphere. I absolutely loved it. People were eating and drinking and having conversations, which speaks to hospitality as a whole – and I feel like they really captured it at Hostex. I really think that this is the place for hospitality professionals, not only one to come and source products, but to be able to network and just find more innovative solutions for your companies or your clients."

Craig Elliott (Head Chef, Unilever Food Solutions SA): "I'm blown away. I've been walking around having a look, catching up with old colleagues and contacts. That's what keeps this industry going. It's all about people. And it's been valuable to keep in touch with our competitors and what they're doing. It's about being real and keeping in touch with the reality of what's happening in the industry. And there couldn't be a better show to do that."

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