

Meanda Mills crowned as Food24's hottest new super chef



By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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Food24 named the winners of their first-ever NextGen competition yesterday morning, 14 September 2017 at a lavish event held in Cape Town on the uppermost floor of the Naspers building, known as the Nasdak.



Elke van Vledder (Philips), Meanda Mills (Overall winner, and Easter category winner), Tessa Purden (Food24), Lucy Jones (Philips).

NextGen is an online culinary competition driven by Food24 and sponsored by Philips, that set out to find a new generation of super-talented young chefs. The competition took place entirely online, and student chefs from culinary schools across the country were challenged to submit recipes according to the theme of the month, accompanied by gorgeous photography or video. The best recipes were featured on Food24 for readers to use and enjoy.



Food24 on the hunt for South Africa's hot, new 'Super Chef'

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The judging panel included James Gaag (La Colombe), Peter Tempelhoff (The Collection), Sam Linsell (Drizzle and Dip food blog), Hope Malau (Taste Magazine's deputy food editor), Elke van Vledder (marketing manager Domestic Appliances Philips South Africa) and Tessa Purdon (Food24's editor). Each entry was judged using criteria that included originality (the recipe needs to be the entrant's own creation); knowledge and understanding of current world food trends; the costing of the recipe; execution and styling/photography skills or video flow.

Searching for fresh, new recipe content

Purdon says it's difficult for student chefs to get their foot through the door, but this award show really aims to open up all those doors purely because of the large audience Food24 has and the exposure that they get. "The idea for the competition came about while we were thinking of ways to get fresh, new recipe content. And our immediate thought was, why don't we approach people who are learning to cook as professional chefs. That's where the whole idea started."

But the process wasn't without its challenges. Purdon says that since the competition is in its first year, some schools might have been spooked by "that element of the unknown". She says there were a lot of schools that they spoke to, but that didn't

really participate. “So overall there were about five or six schools that took part, but we're hoping that next year, after this year's campaign, we'll see a lot more entries because people will see the level of exposure the students can get, and not only the students, but the schools as well. It's a great marketing tool for the culinary schools. It's basically free marketing,” she says.

Category winners

The themes and the category winners are:

Easter theme

Winner: Meanda Mills from Institute of Culinary Arts

Recipe: Hot cross bun cruffins with white chocolate sauce and tiramisu eggnog

Baking theme

Winner: Alisha Van Heerden Institute of Culinary Arts

Recipe: Mieliepap cake with a buffalo yoghurt icing

Low carb theme

Winner: Frances Beresford of Institute of Culinary Arts

Recipe: Low carb smoorsnoek cottage pie

Chocolate theme

Winner: Cebile Maboea of Institute of Culinary Arts

Recipe: Biscuit cone chocolate freakshakes

Braai theme

Student: Darien Prophet of Institute of Culinary Arts

Recipe: Apple Tarte Tatin on the braai

The overall winner was Meanda Mills (21) from the Institute of Culinary Arts whose hot cross bun cruffins with white chocolate sauce and tiramisu eggnog recipe really impressed the judging panel. Purdon says Mills pretty much had the perfect recipe. “She scored very high on originality and also on the photography and styling side, and then also on the execution of the recipe. And she was also knowledgeable on current food trends. She really hit the mark on all those different points of the criteria. And she entered two recipes where most of the participants only entered one. She definitely put in the effort.”

“ In case you missed it, we've just named our first [#Food24NextGen](#) WINNER, in association with [@PhilipsHomeSA](#) ! <https://t.co/bT2VPpHRsl> [pic.twitter.com/nwSVKpOizO](https://t.co/nwSVKpOizO)— food24.com (@food24) [September 14, 2017](#) ”

Here, Mills shares how she came up with the idea for the winning recipe, what she plans to do with the prize money and

some other exciting plans...

▣ ***How do you feel about the win?***

I did not expect it at all. I really enjoyed working with Food24 and everybody involved. It was a great opportunity and I am very honoured and excited about what lies ahead.

▣ ***How did you come up with the idea for the recipe?***

I am not a dessert chef, so it was a difficult thing to come up with. And you have to be innovative and come up with all these new ideas. So, I thought hot cross buns was something that's always been part of our family traditions during Easter. Egg nog is also a traditional holiday drink and I thought that the two would be a perfect pairing, since it then allowed me to also incorporate the eggs that we also get during Easter time.

▣ ***What do you plan to do with the prize money?***

I wasn't planning on winning this. I don't have a plan yet but hopefully I can put it to good use with regards to my career.

▣ ***Any exciting plans in the pipeline?***

At the moment, I am at *Sarie* magazine doing an internship and from there I am finishing at ICA in December and then from there the world is my oyster. I have a few job opportunities, so I am still deciding on what to do next but I am hoping to get back into the industry. I miss the kitchen a lot but with that said, I fell in love with magazines.

▣ ***What inspires you?***

Definitely waking up every day thinking about food, just exploring food and having new ideas about food but also keeping it simple. So, creating food that is extraordinary and out of the ordinary but also keeping it simple because doing too much with food takes away from the food, so actually making food what it is and what it's about and growing it.

For all the winning recipes, click [here](#) and engage with the Food24 team on the following social media platforms: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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