

What's BREWING?

SIHLE MAGUBANE IS HOT STUFF IN THE COFFEE COMMUNITY

Sihle was working as a gardener in KwaZulu-Natal in 2003 when he had his first cup of freshly brewed coffee. He was instantly hooked. When offered the opportunity to train as a barista, he jumped at the chance, and in 2009 went on to compete in the South African Barista Championships.

Now based in Joburg, the 32-year-old recently launched his own range of micro-roasted blends under the name Sihles' Brew, which is the country's first individually black-owned coffee brand. A variety of blends – including his signature dark roast with chocolate and hazelnut notes, and a decaf made by means of a steaming process rather than with chemical solvents – are available at selected Food Lover's Market and Spar stores, and other retailers. A special brew concept store in Jozi featuring his range is in the pipeline too.

Together with the Speciality Coffee Association of Southern Africa (Scasa), Sihle has agreed to allocate a portion of profits to developing the talents of underprivileged aspiring baristas.

At the Barista Championships, they judge you on every step of preparation. There's a lot of pressure when you're on the big screen and have to make a lot of drinks in 15 minutes. You need to be fast and clear, you need to have passion and you need to explain your product.

We create employment and train baristas on weekends. We have placed people in the workplace in Melville and Durban, and can train up to 10 people at a time.

In the morning, I have an espresso. The rest of the day, I'll have either black coffee or cappuccinos – I don't take sugar. I have about 13–15 cups in a day, usually of my own blend.

My signature drink is an avocado coffee.

In my blend, I use only 100% pure Arabica. I mix African and Central American coffee – from Brazil and Guatemala. These are sweet on the palate and very smooth, but they don't have body. To create the whole experience, with a full-body and unique taste profile, I add African coffee, which is more fruity. **LS**

For more information, visit sihlesbrew.co.za.

