

Young Kenyan makes a name for himself producing artisan chocolate

At the tender age of 30, Naheed Ahmed is the founder and managing director of The Chocolate Bar, an artisan chocolate company based in Nairobi, Kenya that manufactures a wide range of high-quality chocolate products.



Naheed Ahmed, founder and MD of The Chocolate Bar. Source: Supplied

Ahmed started his journey to chocolate maker after graduating from Capsicum Culinary Studio, having undertaken the culinary school's International Professional Chef Management diploma, Professional Patisserie Programme, Advanced Professional Chef Management Programme and Professional Chocolate Arts & Confectionary Programme.



Inheriting a passion for food

“As a child, I spent a lot of time in the kitchen hanging around my late grandmother, whom we called ‘Maa’, watching her work her magic,” says Ahmed. “At the time, she was a professional chef and served as an executive chef in various institutions as well as working at 5-star hotels in Nairobi.

“Her love and passion for food was immense, and she would spend many late hours whipping up something in preparation for the next day. She found peace and happiness in the kitchen, and like all grandmothers took pride in feeding her family. I believe she was my greatest inspiration, along with my everlasting love for good food.”



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After completing high school, Ahmed decided that his future lay in a career in the culinary world and he enrolled at Capsicum's Cape Town campus as a foreign student. After graduating at the end of 2013, he returned home to Nairobi and the start of his entrepreneurial journey.

“I started a small chocolate company in 2014, where we made gourmet pralines, truffles and bonbons and had a small chocolate shop at The Village Market Mall in Nairobi. The kitchen where I made the products was only 55 square metres and I had one employee,” says Ahmed.

From bean to bar



Source: Supplied

Fast forward to 2021 and Ahmed now oversees a factory 10 times that size and employs nine additional workers, manufacturing chocolate from bean to bar and creating products from truffles to pralines, slabs to spreads and drinking chocolate to ice-cream.

“Our products can now be found in supermarkets around the country, in a few health shops in the UAE and has also made it to all parts of the world through sales via the duty-free shops in Kenya. We also supply to hotels chains and coffee shops around the country,” he says.

Where does Ahmed see himself in five years' time? “With continuous investment towards improving our facilities, I hope to increase the annual manufacturing capability from the current five to 6 tonnes we produce annually to around 20 tonnes or more.”

What would Maa think of her little kitchen helper now? “I think she would be most proud, and I'm sure she lays her guidance over me from the heavens above.”