

MEET THE CHEF

PAULO SANTO

Chef de Cuisine at Bel Mondo, Polofields Crossing

Now that you have read all about the newly opened Bel Mondo Trattoria Moderna, find out more about the amazing head chef, Paulo, and what inspires his contemporary Italian cooking style.

Q: When did you decide to become a chef?

A: In 2004. BBC Food had launched in South Africa, exposing me to the global culinary world and the excitement of high-end restaurants.

Q: Did you study? If so, where?

A: Yes, at the Silwood School of Cookery in Cape Town.

Q: Do you have any accolades?

A: I have achieved several over the years, however it's not in my nature to list these.



Q: What is your cooking style?

A: Classic French and Italian, with global influences and modern techniques.

Q: What is your inspiration for new recipes/dishes?

A: Beautiful, fresh, seasonal produce.

Q: What is your favourite dish to prepare on your current menu and why?

A: This would be the Gamberi alla Vodka Piccante, with Mozambican prawns, Calabrian chilli oil and our house vodka sauce. Paired with al dente rigatoni, the dish is simple, moreish and perfect as a winter warmer.

Q: What is your favourite home-cooked meal?

A: Grilled lamb loin, served with garlic butter potatoes, feta and olives – it's a dish I share with my daughter Luna, regularly.

Q: In your opinion, what is the most underrated ingredient and why?

A: The potato. After the egg, it is easily the ingredient with the most versatility and is always loved by all around the table.

Q: If you could cook with only three ingredients, what would they be?

A: Salt, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, and a fresh piece of line-caught fish.

Q: What are the kitchen tools or appliances you cannot function without?

A: A good hand blender and a sous vide circulator.

Q: If money were no object, what kitchen appliance would you invest in?

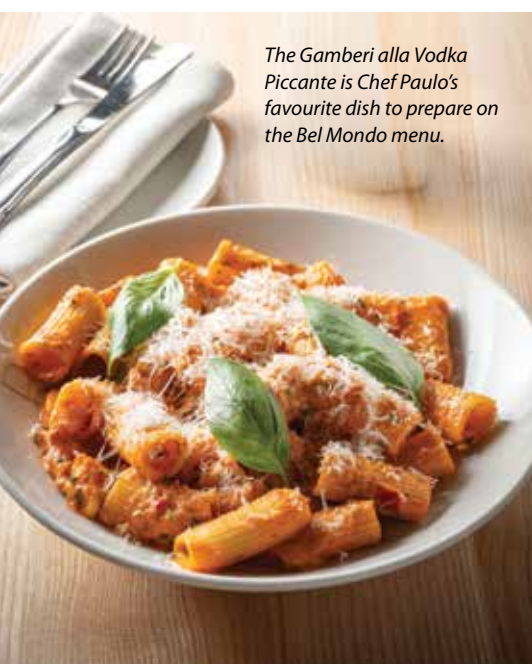
A: A Thermomix TM7, an all-in-one appliance.

Q: Who is your chef idol and why?

A: Anthony Bourdain, the author of *Kitchen Confidential*. Without this book, I would never have understood the true essence and culture of a professional kitchen.

Q: If you could prepare a meal for one celebrity, who would it be, and what would you serve?

A: A humble meal of fresh pasta with butter, parmesan, and truffles. Served to Anthony Bourdain, sitting on a crate in the kitchen, sharing a beer and appreciating the beauty of simple ingredients, prepared well.



The Gamberi alla Vodka Piccante is Chef Paulo's favourite dish to prepare on the Bel Mondo menu.



Meet The Chef Series

Q: What do you think of cooking shows? Do you have a favourite?

A: Personally, I no longer enjoy these, given their nature and lack of authenticity. However, the first season or two of *MasterChef Australia* will always be a favourite.

Q: What is your favourite South African dish to eat?

A: Karoo lamb – over the coals. Nothing compares.

Q: What will we always find in your fridge?

A: Butter, eggs, parmesan and olives.

Q: If you could choose your last meal, what would it be?

A: My last meal, which I would wish to share with my daughter Luna, would be a little selection of dishes the two of us really enjoy cooking and sharing together. Warm kitke/challah bread with salted butter, a huge Neapolitan Prosciutto Crudo pizza, fried calamari with lemon and sea salt, lamb chops grilled over the fire with herb pesto, lots of garlic butter potatoes, and the best strawberry gelato we can find to finish it all off.

Q: What fast food is your secret indulgence?

A: A Burger King Chilli Cheeseburger is a ridiculously tasty weekend cheat meal!

Q: Pro or anti air fryers?

A: Pro. It's quite amazing what one can whip up in 30 minutes when the last thing you want to do is dirty pots and pans for a quick meal. Great invention.

Q: If you weren't a chef, what would you be?

A: Likely a business person of some sort in the food industry. I grew up around food and business, so it's what comes most naturally to me.

Q: Any advice you would like to share with budding chefs?

A: Forget about social media, forget about television, forget about accolades and awards and all the fluff – just cook. All day, every day, until you know there's absolutely nothing else you want to do in life. Work and learn with the best to become the best, and never compromise on ingredient quality, ever!



Bel Mondo's Neapolitan Prosciutto Crudo pizza would be one of Chef Paulo's last meals of choice.

Visit Bel Mondo today to immerse yourself in the beauty of an authentic contemporary Italian trattoria.

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