

The Soweto Kota Festival: Celebrating the versatility of potatoes

By Sheila Makgato, Potatoes SA

The Potatoes SA team was privileged to attend and sponsor the 2024 Soweto Kota Festival. The exciting annual event took place on 7 September 2024 at Fun Valley Pleasure Resort in Johannesburg.

The main objectives were to enhance the profile of potatoes among consumers as a versatile part of daily meals and to encourage South Africans to eat one more potato a week. Before the festival, Potatoes SA was invited to the media launch and a vendor briefing, where sponsors connected with vendors to understand their needs and expectations.

The festival celebrates and promotes one of the most famous foods in townships, the kota. It is a vibrant celebration of food, music and culture, with a record-breaking attendance of over 14 000 people and

70 kota vendors. Additionally, there were cocktail, snack, kids' toys and clothing stalls, and more.

Potatoes and kotas

Potatoes are a key ingredient in a kota. While kotas have evolved over time, potatoes remain a constant ingredient in all forms. The traditional kota consists of bread, slap chips, russians, viennas, cheese slices and achar (raw mangoes with spices and oil). Over the years, the kota has evolved, and now includes variations such as mash and mince or mash and pilchards.

Potatoes SA had two stands at the festival, one for kids and one for adults. The team educated attendees regarding different potato varieties and the best cooking methods for each. We also hosted competitive games where children could win Potatoes SA merchandise, making it a fun and engaging experience.

GROW Market Agents and RSA Group were among Potatoes SA's co-sponsors for the Soweto Kota Festival. The agents had the opportunity to network with kota outlet owners. We extend our gratitude and hope the experience was valuable for the agents.

Boosting the industry

Potatoes SA's brand ambassador, Alfred Ntombela, also attended the festival. His infectious laughter and bubbly personality created an atmosphere of joy and good vibes. Patrons had the opportunity to win bags of potatoes by posting pictures with the hashtag #ChoosePotatoes.

The Kota Festival contributes to the local economy and social development by creating jobs and generating revenue for local entrepreneurs. It also fosters a cultural



Hanrie Greebe, Potatoes SA's communication manager, and Dirk Uys, research manager, attended the festival.



Alfred Ntombela, Potatoes SA's brand ambassador, entertained with his unique laugh and bubbly personality.



A meal on its own. Vendors sold kotas with traditional and some new ingredients.

exchange environment that helps build community.

Attending the Soweto Kota Festival is part of Potatoes SA's broader marketing strategy. By participating in events where we can connect with our main market and understand consumer buying behaviour, the marketing team can develop campaigns that resonate with our target market.

Consumers insights

Potatoes SA conducted some interviews at the Soweto Kota Festival, and this is what consumers had to say:

What are some unusual ways you use potatoes in meals?

Boiling potatoes before adding them to stew, or making potato brownies, baked potato sandwiches, and potato crisps.

Do you consider potatoes to be healthy?

Yes/No/Why?

Both yes and no answers were received. People regard potatoes are healthy because they are rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, fibre, and resistant starch. However, they can be unhealthy when fried as fried potatoes may also come with some potential negative effects, including weight gain, especially when consumed in large quantities.

What is the percentage of potato usage at home versus in takeaways?

Consumers indicated that they use 60% of potatoes at home, while 40% are used in *spykos* (takeaways).



Potatoes were displayed for educational purposes.

Key learnings from festival

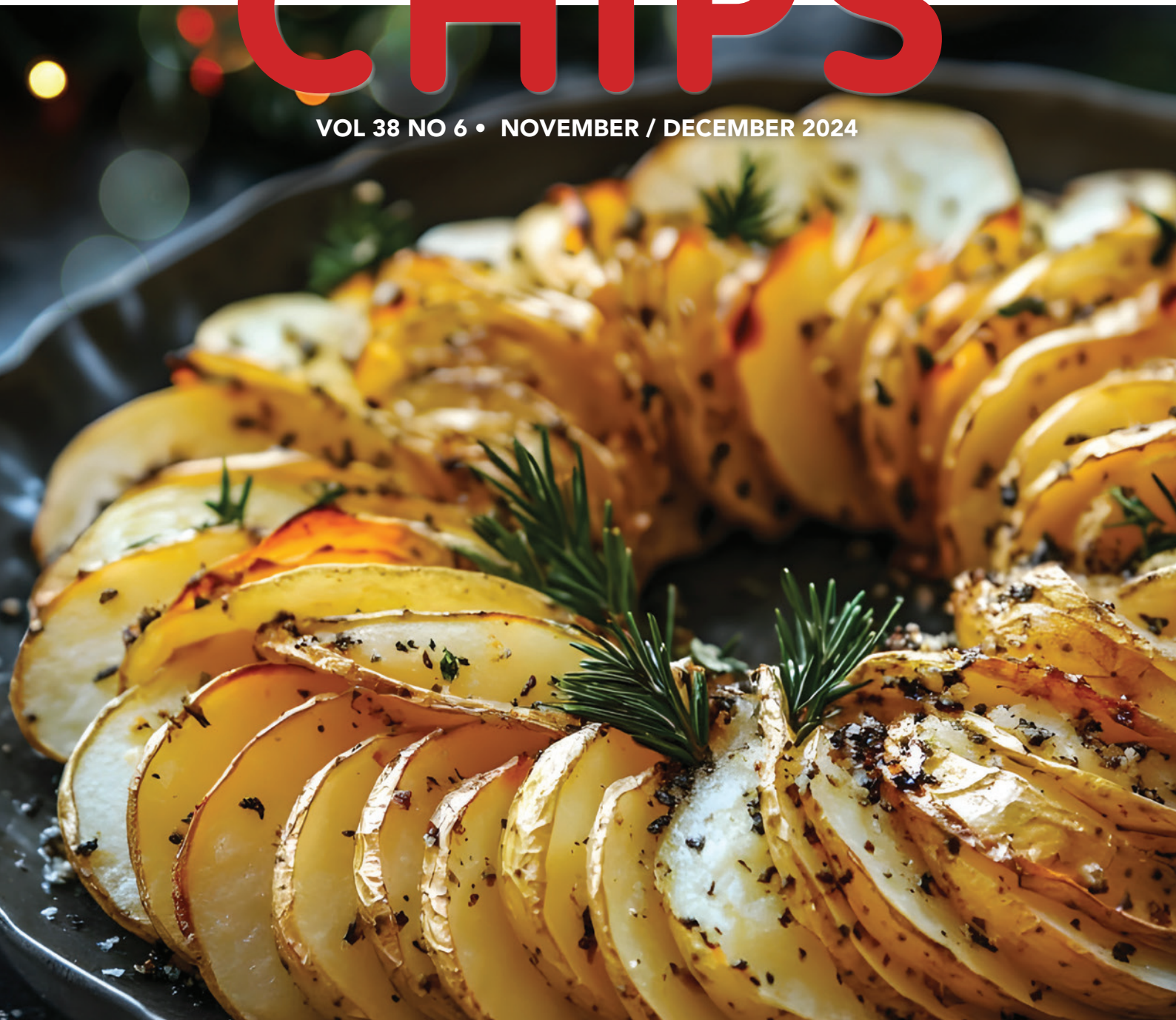
- The South African *kota* economy is estimated to be worth over R10 billion, with potatoes being a key ingredient.
- A downstream industry exists that prepares *slap* chips in bulk for *kota* outlets.
- *Kota* outlet owners are brand conscious.
- South Africans love the *kota*, with over 14 000 people having attended this year's festival to celebrate this iconic foodstuff. 🍟

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