

What is filling up your plate?

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This year kicked off at breakneck speed and everyone I talk to seems to be out of breath and is just as weary as they were before we knocked off for our well-deserved December break in 2023. That got me wondering: What drives us to often take on more than we should?

In South Africa, there are numerous factors driving our sense of urgency and they tend to make for a full plate:

- On the other side of our borders, countries are waging war.
- Back home, the elections are looming and are fraught with uncertainty.
- Profitability is nosediving and investors are distancing themselves from us.
- Businesses are closing at an alarming rate and the unemployment rate keeps rising.
- Lawlessness seems to be the order of the day and a simple drive to work has become a challenge in itself.
- The fuel price, cost of living, rising food prices – the pressure of balancing income against expenses is growing by the day.

To run or not to run

There are many other factors that can be listed here, but let's stick to this for now and accept that the picture is bleak and that our urgency is based on fear and the need to simply survive. It is difficult to put a positive spin on these problems but every time I find myself wondering to which hills we should run when things finally go south. There really is only one place – the south.

We are already there. I am staying, come hell or high water.

The average South African's plate is full yes, and it doesn't look very appetising right now but we do love our food and unwittingly we also tend to fill our plates with ingredients that look more or less like this:

- Massive amounts of tolerance and giving each other the time of day.
- Greeting strangers and dishing out a smile. Try doing this abroad.
- The sun. A recent article on the local property market cited numbers showing how many expats are returning to South Africa, mostly because of the weather and better cost of living. Indeed many are leaving, but many are also returning.
- Potatoes. We've got excellent producers who don't depend on subsidies and keep on producing, come rain or shine, come government or not.
- Agriculture. This sector remains a creator of jobs, a supplier of nutrition, a source of security. While the rest of the world's producers are protesting, ours are doing what South Africans do best – getting on with the work at hand.

So when my mind wanders and tilts over to the negative side, it is always good to take stock of what makes us a great nation. It is certainly not the government or the economy – it is us. Let's take a deep breath, stop running for one second, and say cheers to that.

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IN 2023**

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on protecting potatoes