

Western Cape family business reaps rewards of "breakthrough" Checkers deal

Jacobs Jam, the family business owned by Western Cape couple Nigel and Christynn Jacobs, has seen exponential growth after securing a deal with the Shoprite Group in October 2022. In under six months, the jam business expanded from supplying 10 Checkers stores to 20 across the Western Cape.



Jacobs Jam founders Nigel and Christynn Jacobs. Source: Supplied

The couple is based in the Ceres Valley – the biggest fruit-producing town in the country – where Jacobs Jam has created employment for 12 people. Most of its employees join the business without prior experience and are provided with the necessary skills training to work in the factory as well as to enter the workforce in related industries.

Combining Christynn's experience as a food technologist with Nigel's background in FMCG marketing, the couple quit their corporate jobs in 2018 and registered Jacobs Jam. "While it was freeing for us to finally take that leap of faith, we weren't prepared for the struggle that followed. We had no income for two years and securing funding was a long, arduous journey," says Nigel.

"The Checkers deal was a massive breakthrough for us because it was the first formal, national retailer that said, 'we are going to support you'."



Source: Supplied

Scaling the business

Christynn initially developed jam recipes in her home kitchen, but now production takes place in a facility fitted with state-of-the-art machinery and equipment. The couple wanted to launch their business at scale, and although they were already supplying to nearly 400 independent outlets throughout South Africa, the Shoprite Group gave them access to the formal retail market.

The jam comes in four flavours: mixed fruit, apricot, strawberry and pomegranate – the latter being a happy accident that Christynn discovered when she ran out of her usual fruit and decided to use the pomegranate that she had in her kitchen. The only pomegranate jam producer in the world, Jacobs Jam is also exported to Zambia. The products contain no preservatives, colourants or flavourants, and can be kept in the pantry for up to 18 months.



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The business has plans to expand by increasing its range to include fruit juices, chutney and other fruit-related products. “Getting support from the Shoprite Group has motivated us to think even bigger. We want Jacobs Foods to grow into a national food company and we are constantly learning about the retail business as we grow,” says Nigel.

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