

# 'Oshikwiila' project grows by heaps and bounds



Mwaala Susan



Mwaala Francina

**By Asser Ntinda**

Sheer love for cultural foods and drinks has driven one woman into a unique but now growing business undertaking few would venture into – baking traditional bread (oshikwiila) and brewing oshikundu, a tradition non-alcoholic brew, for sale.

Forty-one year old Selma Amalovu started her business in 2004 in Windhoek, using an ordinary oven to bake "iikwiila" for customers whose appetite

for traditional foods and drinks has made her business grow beyond her expectation.

"It was not easy at the beginning but through sheer contacts and a lot of convincing, I have made my business well known," she said, as she pounded sorghum from which she prepares Iikwiila and Oshikundu.

"I love culture. I love traditional foods and drinks because they are healthy. They are not genetically modified like most of the foods we buy in shops

here. These are healthy foods because they grow naturally."

She started small, baking may be 20 or 30 iikwiila per day, only on request, until many people have come to know her. Now her business has grown and the ordinary oven from which she bakes them has no capacity to meet the growing demands.

"People phone to place orders when they have parties such as weddings, birthdays, engagements and even graduation parties. I did not know



After hard work, it is time to share Oshikwiila. Photo by Asser Ntinda.



Businesswoman Selma Amalovu pounding sorghum for her business. Photo by Asser Ntinda



that there were many people who love traditional foods," she said, while gently sweeping some sorghum that went astray while she was pounding.

Oshini from which she pounds sorghum is also small but that has not dashed her hope and business acumen to carry on and see her project through. Patience, hard-work, conviction and steeled-will and zeal to succeed where others have failed finally paid off.

"I knocked at every door and talked to anybody who could listen. I presented my business plan and looked for sponsors. In November last year, my dream came true when I was given equipment worth over N\$290 000 by the Ministry of Trade and Industry to increase the capacity of my business and cope with the growing demand," she said, pointing to the equipment that was donated to her.

Amalovu has not yet put such equipment to use because the place is small and the power from the house where she runs her business cannot handle heavy industrial machines like the ones she now has.

"I am currently looking for a place where there is enough industrial power to use those machines. Very soon I will find a place and you will see the wonders I will make with this business," she said.

"People come and place their orders on a regular basis. Now I make between 500 and 1000 pieces of Iikwiila per day. I thank the government for really helping us in this manner.

"I am very grateful. I will make sure that this business succeeds. I do not want to disappoint my government. What it has put in is a lot. Therefore, failure is not an option. It is out completely."

One piece of Shikwiila costs N\$60,00, but she also cuts it into small equal pieces and each goes for N\$6,00. "The people like it," she said, handing out one piece to one of the girls who help her pound and sift sorghum.

Amalovu was born at Oshukwa Village in Ongandjera District, Omusati Region. She got her primary education there and moved on to Oshakati Combined School. She later returned to Ongandjera where she enrolled at Etalaleko Secondary School. Later on, she moved to Windhoek where she enrolled at Oshifidi Secondary School.

Like many of her young peers at that age, she left Namibia for Angola in 1986 where she joined SWAPO and its then military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia, PLAN. She returned

home in 1989 under the United Nations repatriation programme.


After independence, she worked for several non-governmental organizations, NGOs, especially those dealing with HIV and AIDS. She has also run several development projects for the government in various regions and has qualified as a trainer.

"I am a forward looking person and positive about possibilities in business," she said, as her 20 year old son, Lukas Nakale, took some sufficient gulps of Oshikundu. "There are many business opportunities here.

"People must be self-driven and start creating jobs rather than looking for jobs. Government, like in my case, will help. People want to see you trying and they will come in to help.

"What is needed is a will to succeed, a determination to pass through hurdles and overcome challenges and innovative ideas to make your business attractive. Where there is a will, there is a way."

There is a way, indeed.



Republic of Namibia

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**At the same time, Namibians should zealously protect and nurture the peace and tranquility that we have been enjoying since independence.**

**Long live peace and hope in Africa!**

**Long live the Republic of Namibia!**