

# The HEART *of the* HOTEL

## *At the AfroChic Hotel*

on the Indian Ocean, perhaps no one embodies this hotel's hospitality better than Mwatamu Masoud.

"He has this way about him," says Heath Dhana, director of operations for the Elewana Collection, whose portfolio includes this hotel and properties in Tanzania, Zanzibar and Kenya. "If you've had a lazy breakfast, and it's before lunchtime, possibly around 11 o'clock or so, he will come to you with a platter of some samosas that he's freshly made with feta and coriander. They're crisp and just freshly fried, and it's as if he anticipated that you needed this snack."

Masoud, a native Kenyan who attended culinary school and worked his way up through Kenyan kitchens, says the guests help inspire him. "For a new dish, I normally go to my guests and talk with them — what does excite them? — and then I go from there," he says. "I have different recipes for different guests. Some like things spicy, and sometimes they don't. It's a very intimate property, and since you have a chance to meet with them upon their arrival, you already know a good amount about them."

### **'YOU REMEMBER'**

Masoud says he tries to make the guests feel at home. "It starts with knowing their

cravings and tastes. Many of my guests are repeat, and they send me emails like 'Can I have the crab cake?' Then, when I make them what they want, they say 'Oh, Masoud, you are here, you remember my prawn samosa!'"

Guests stay at AfroChic an average of five to seven days, and in the winter season, for as long as three or four weeks, says Joab Andayi, AfroChic's GM. They can eat at any time of day or night, in practically any part of the hotel. "When the chef pops up with a surprise bite of samosas, these interactions are what make guests always want to come back," Andayi says.

Masoud share his recipes with guests as well. "One dish we call steamed fish in banana leaf, but my guests don't have banana leaves where they're from," he says. "I give them the same recipe, but they can use foil paper instead of banana leaves. I often share my cooking knowledge and recipes by emails."



**MWATAMU MASOUD**  
EXECUTIVE CHEF

**AFROCHIC DIANI**  
DIANI BEACH, KENYA

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He also has started a tradition. If a group of families or friends is visiting, or couples who are interested, he will set up a friendly cooking competition called koroga, which in Swahili means "mixing." The koroga is held on the hotel's garden deck, and it usually features dishes that don't take a long time to cook — like stir fries or curries.

"It's a competition, but it's also a class, and chef guides them through the process," Andayi says. "We have one family who comes every December, and the main thing they want to do is the koroga."