

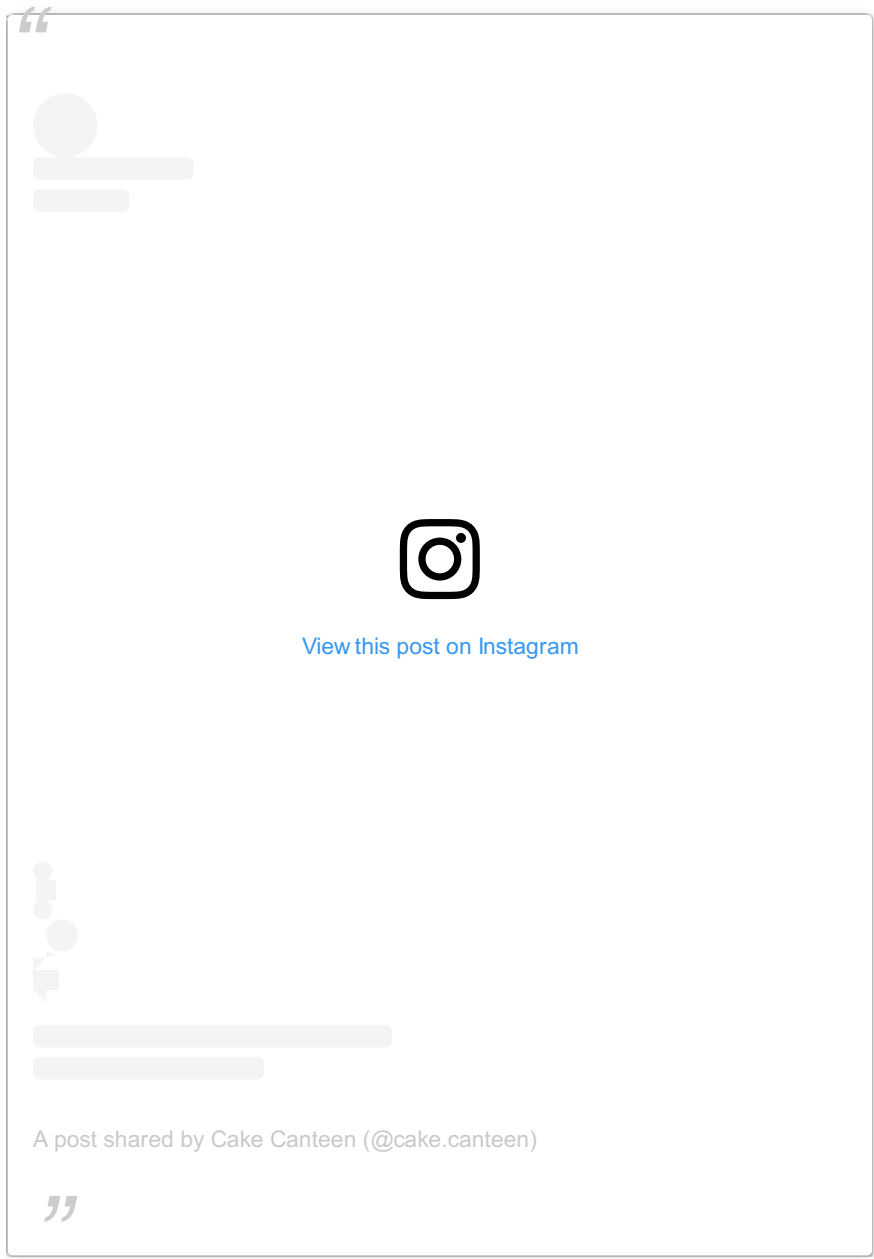
Cake Canteen - born out of ‘collaboration over competition’

By  [Evan-Lee Courie](#)

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In 2012, entrepreneur Jandri van Zyl saw a gap in the bakery market, a significant segment of the food industry, encompassing various products such as bread, cakes, pastries, and more, and decided to open a commercial bakery and The Velvet Cake Co was born.

Fast forward years later, the desire for ‘collaboration over competition’, was the reason Jandri van Zyl decided it was the perfect time to bring cake-lovers a sit-down and in-store cake shop, Cake Canteen.



Van Zyl takes us behind the scenes of Cake Canteen...

How and when did Cake Canteen come about? What was the inspiration behind it?

Cake Canteen originated as a collective space created and curated by The Velvet Cake Co, a Cape Town-based online

bakery since 2012. The inspiration behind it was to collaborate with Hertex Fabrics to conceptualise a stunning sit-down and in-store cake shop within their beautiful showrooms.

This collaboration aimed to provide customers with a unique and immersive experience, combining the expertise of both brands in their respective fields.

■ ***You've gone from online to having a physical store. What was behind this decision?***

The decision to transition from online to brick-and-mortar was driven by a desire to stay up to date with international trends and offer customers a sit-down experience focused solely on cakes. Despite having a physical presence in different forms previously, The Velvet Cake Co. recognised the importance of adapting to changing consumer preferences and providing a more interactive and specialised cake experience.

■ ***With so many businesses going online, you did the reverse. How has this been for the business?***

The Velvet Cake Co. has always valued having a physical presence as an integral part of their cake community. This allows for direct interaction with the product and enables them to receive in-person feedback from loyal customers.

The decision to transition Cake Canteen from an online platform to a brick-and-mortar store further solidified this commitment to engaging with customers in person. By providing a tangible space where customers can experience the cakes firsthand and engage with the brand, Cake Canteen enhances its connection with the community and strengthens customer loyalty.



Jandri van Zyl. Image supplied

■ What have some of the challenges been with this transition?

Brick-and-mortar or physical shops inherently carry the risk of food waste, making stock control crucial. Managing inventory levels effectively becomes paramount to minimising waste. However, Cake Canteen is tackling this challenge proactively by fostering a culture of conscious cake consumption.

We are creatively repurposing all our cakes in various ways, ensuring that no product goes to waste. One of our most popular initiatives born from this effort is our cake nuggets, which have become a beloved product among our customers. This approach not only reduces waste but also enhances sustainability and customer satisfaction.

■ You're now at two locations with Hertex (first High Street and now Gardens). How did this collaboration come about?

The collaboration between Hertex Fabrics and The Velvet Cake Co. stemmed from a long-term relationship between the two

brands and their shared values of creativity and customer experience.

Hertex's beautiful and creative showroom spaces provided the perfect setting for Cake Canteen to showcase their cakes, offering customers a delightful fusion of design and indulgence.

▣ ***Where do you see Cake Canteen in the next few years?***

Cake Canteen envisions expanding its presence in various forms, including more sit-down shops, express shops, and maintaining a strong online presence. By continuously innovating and adapting to evolving consumer preferences, Cake Canteen aims to remain a prominent player in the cake industry, offering customers unique and memorable experiences across different touchpoints

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