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Kleopas Martin

## Brewer

### A True Trailblazer in an Exciting Industry

Brewers make ale or beer from malt and hops by infusion, boiling, and fermentation. Put simply, brewing is the practice of regulating the interactions between water, starch, yeast, and hops so that the end result is what is called beer.

Meet 33-year old Kleopas Martin, a qualified brewer employed by Namibia Breweries, a subsidiary of the Ohlthaver and List Group. Kleopas has successfully entered a career path, which until recently, was not an option for Namibians from previously disadvantaged groups. This is his story.

### Childhood Dreams

Kleopas Martin hails from Ondangwa in the Otjikoto region, where he grew up with his four sisters and two brothers. He attended the Oluno Primary School, whereafter he moved on to Ongha Senior Secondary School, where he completed Grade 12.

"I was just an average guy. Most of the time, you'll find me reading and studying. But, I also enjoyed gardening and playing football with friends during my spare time. However, what mattered most was my schoolwork.", he recalls.

Kleopas' childhood dream was to become an engineer. Always a conscientious and diligent learner, his Grade 12 results were of such that it landed him entry into a two-year Engineering Bridging course at the University of Namibia.





## Golden Opportunity

Kleopas passed the bridging course with flying colours. However, as fate would have it, his dream to pursue further studies in Engineering in neighbouring South Africa did not materialise.

Realising that he couldn't afford to sit idle and driven by a strong desire to make something of his life, Kleopas applied for a Namibia Breweries Limited (NBL) scholarship to qualify as a brewer. "I was desperate. And honestly, I didn't think at the time that I stood a chance, because a key requirement was for applicants to be fluent in German. I couldn't speak any German", he recalls.

Shortly after submitting his application, Kleopas was also awarded a bursary to further his Engineering studies in South Africa. But, before he could even accept the bursary, Namibia

Breweries called him in for a series of interviews and tests. "Although I gave it my best shot, I wasn't very confident after the tests. However, two weeks later they invited me for another assessment. I was waiting in the reception area after this test, when the Manager came out and told me I was the successful candidate. I started my apprenticeship immediately", Kleopas shares.

## Exciting Apprenticeship

Kleopas excelled under the Namibia Breweries' three-year Apprentice Brewer Programme, which covers both the theoretical and practical aspects of the job. "I found the subject matter very interesting. From the chemistry and fermentation to safety considerations and personal hygiene. I wanted to know everything about the brewing process and I made it a point to do so", he says.

Upon completing his apprenticeship, Kleopas left for Germany to further his studies towards becoming a qualified Brewer and Maltster. He reached this goal in 2006, after which Namibia Breweries employed him as a Brewer, at its Windhoek plant. "The apprenticeship and training programmes really made the transition to the real world of work very easy and I was able to hit the ground running", he notes.

## Specialised Trade

Kleopas worked as a Brewer for a few years, during which period, he gained a lot of experience in the running of a brewing plant and exposure to the overall production process.

Convinced that he has made the right career decision, he decided to further his studies and enrolled for further training to qualify as a Brewmaster, in 2012. "I joined the NBL's three-and-a-half-year

rotational programme, which exposes you to all departments in the production line. They focus on all aspects, from packaging and utilities to engineering and projects. You develop an thorough understanding of what's happening behind the scenes in every department", he explains.

As a graduate of the NBL Brewmaster Programme, Kleopas now works as at the Unit Manager of the Packaging Department. He is recognised by supervisors and colleagues alike as a committed and skilled craftsman and a methodical and organised team member. "The biggest challenge in my job is leading people in keeping up with production demands. Leading people is not an easy thing. We work with machines and machines

need to be maintained. Your plans sometimes change from day to day. You have to prioritise, go back to the drawing board and plan again. You need to be flexible”, he explains.

## Career Ambitions

In spite of the challenges, Kleopas is excelling in his job. He has ambitious plans to further grow and establish himself as a Brewmaster of note. “My passion for brewing comes from the heart and it motivates me to come to work everyday. In the next three to five years, I see myself as one of the top managers in the NBL supply chain”, he shares.

Kleopas also appreciates the fact that he has become a rolemodel for Namibians, especially those from previously disadvantaged groups. While embracing his status as an ambassador for prospective brewer apprentices, he warns anyone wishing to enter this career path, that it requires heaps of self-discipline and commitment. “Being in the business for fourteen years and having worked myself up through the ranks was not a walk in the park, at all. It required heaps of hard work and dedication. You have to stay positive and focused on your goals”, he highlights.

Kleopas now takes it upon himself to mentor other newcomer

apprentices, who have decided on this career option. “Mentoring has become a day-to-day thing. I’ve benefitted immensely from others mentoring me and I now have the same responsibility to also transfer my knowledge and skill to our newcomers”, he says.

## Shared Passion

Regardless of the fact that he has established himself as a key member in the NBL value chain, Kleopas remains humble and unpretentious. His calm demeanour and work ethic make him a productive and efficient colleague and a loyal and trusted friend.

“I am motivated by our leadership and organisational culture. At NBL,

we motivate each other to always do better and excel. We support each other to grow, not only in the work we do, but as human beings. We work as a team and we share our passion for brewing”, Kleopas explains.

There’s the saying that if life throws you lemons, to make lemonade. Kleopas Martin has decided to take the lemons life threw at him and to make beer, instead. Humble, but driven, his story teaches us that without continual growth

and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have little meaning. That achievement is all about honest endeavor and persistent effort to do the best possible under any, and all circumstances.

He is living his passion as a Brewer. And he believes that other young men and women can do the same.

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