

# BAKERS IN A FIX AS AVIAN FLU AFFECTS SUPPLY OF EGGS



Nomprumelelo Busane, who works at KC's Butter Biscuits Confectionery, situated on Ormond Street in Pietermaritzburg said the bakery has been affected by the limitations on the supply of eggs, due to the avian flu outbreak. PHOTO: NQUBEKO MBHELE

## CHANEL GEORGE and NTOMBIZETHU NGCOBO

You may have to pay extra for your baked goods, as the avian flu-induced egg shortage has forced local bakeries and home industries to adjust their prices.

The avian flu has hit the province hard, with five chicken farms in KwaZulu-Natal being placed under quarantine, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Super Zuma confirmed.

Zuma said the outbreak has led to a shortage of eggs, with several retailers alerting customers that shelves could be empty soon.

This will have a dire impact on bakeries and small home industry businesses in the city, with many of them already working around completing orders with a decreased supply of eggs, at a higher price.

Talayna Naidoo, who runs her business Baked by Talayna, from home, said she has had to increase the prices of her baked goods, due to the increase in egg prices. She

is also proactively considering eggless alternatives to her recipes, in the event of an egg shortage in the province.

"I've had to increase my prices because it seems that not only did the price of eggs increase but other ingredients as well," said Naidoo.

"The amount of eggs I use per cake differs and depends on the size and flavour of the cake."

Vanessa Sookaloo, owner of Vanessa's Tough Cookies, said the increase in the price of eggs, up to R30 a tray, coupled with inflation, has had a substantial impact on her baking business, noting that eggs are a key ingredient in most desserts and baked goods.

"I use three to four trays a week. Any price increase for home businesses is a loss of revenue. While commercial outlets have a larger customer base, home industries rely on a smaller clientele that can afford to indulge specific cravings."

When asked if she will be stocking up on eggs, she said no.

"The electricity in Hayfields is

more often off than on. On Tuesday, the lights tripped every hour, making my fridges very unreliable, and I keep my eggs in the fridge to stay fresh," said Sookaloo.

She said her second reason for not stocking up on eggs is because, at almost R90 a tray, she cannot afford to. Fortunately though, due to the month of fasting observed by Hindus, she has had good practise in eggless baking. I'm already on a roll with [making] eggless [products]. I accommodate vegans as well, so I can bake egg-free if need be. But I pray it never comes to that," said Sookaloo.

Kuven Cannan, owner of KC's bakery, said they have a longstanding supplier for their eggs, however, they too as a bakery have been limited with the amount of stock they can buy.

"We are limited to eight dozen eggs a week, however, we will be preparing for Diwali soon, which means we will be preparing eggless products," said Cannan.

Following the announcement

of the avian flu outbreak reaching KZN, Zuma has advised, as a general precaution that, wherever possible, people should avoid direct contact with wild birds. "We placed the farms under quarantine to [prevent] the chickens' movement [and contain the spread]. The chickens are then culled. We can confirm that all the chickens and eggs that are available in shops don't pose a health hazard. The [quarantined] farms will not function for two months," he said.

He also appealed to farmers to keep chicken coops clean.

"We should not allow birds to eat together with chickens. This disease comes from birds. It differs as we have an H5 and H7 [variant of flu], which is more advanced to a level that it can spread to humans. We urge farmers to be extra cautious and use chemicals that can curb the spread of this disease to chicken coops," said Zuma, adding that they are still trying to find other means to curb this disease.

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