



OCEAN *of* FLAVOURS

Chef Soane Fakatava

Head Chef Soane Fakatava at Nuku'alofa's renowned Seaview Restaurant says his culinary path was paved by the deep dedication of his mother, Seletute, whose greatest wish was for him to graduate from the 'Ahopanilolo Technical College in Tonga.

After establishing his foundations at home in Ma'ufanga over many years, Chef Soane left Tonga and travelled to Germany to gain invaluable experience, cooking in numerous well-respected kitchens.

His career highlights include the distinct honour of occasionally preparing meals for the Tongan Royal Family, as well as international VIPs, and cooking under the guidance of the legendary, Michelin-starred celebrity chef Johann Lafer at the famous Stromburg castle in Germany.

With over 30 years' experience, Chef Soane is not only a master of South Pacific fusion cuisine leading the kitchen back home at Seaview Restaurant, but a mentor to the next

generation of Pacific chefs, dedicating much of his time to training hospitality students at his restaurant and occasionally returning to teach classes at the local culinary school.

Chef Soane is part of an invited cohort of Pacific-based chefs, who will take part in the upcoming Ocean of Flavours: One Ocean, Many Flavours event, at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) School of Hospitality and Tourism, 21 -22 September, 2026.

Along with a cohort of chefs from New Zealand, the group will take part in a high-energy culinary collaboration on day one, and engage with food writers, influencers, and industry stakeholders on day two, culminating in a dinner for the public on September 22.

Working with the Pacific chefs, renowned Kiwi Chef Peter Gordon is coordinating the dinner menu, sourcing Pacific ingredients which showcase the many flavours of the region celebrating what the Blue Continent has to offer.

For Chef Soane, taking part in the event is an opportunity to represent Tonga and help cement it on the global culinary map by sharing the Kingdom's vibrant culture through food.

"I also hope to inspire the next generation of Pacific chefs to follow what they love and see just how far it can take them," he says.

Stirred by the memory of his mother's support, it is the love of his family which keeps him cooking.

"When I cook, it is very important for me to use fresh, regional ingredients and to strictly support local suppliers in Tonga," he adds.

"I continue to be inspired by the natural bounty of the Pacific Ocean, which bridges my international training with our traditional Tongan flavours.

"My absolute favourite dish to prepare is a stuffed whole Red Snapper served with a rich, aromatic coconut curry sauce, using freshly squeezed Tongan coconut cream made completely from scratch in our kitchen—never canned or frozen."

When he is not behind the stove, Chef Soane loves to eat fresh lobster, seafood and vegetables, and has a great appreciation for down-to-earth, rustic cuisine.

"Due to my time spent living and working in Southern Germany over the years, I have also developed a love for traditional German comfort food—I absolutely adore a delicious, crispy Schweinshaxe (pork knuckle) or hearty venison and wild game dishes, especially those my mother-in-law used to prepare so wonderfully."

With only a few weeks until OCEAN of FLAVOURS, Chef Soane is busy designing what he wants to bring to the table, with some Tongan flair.

"Food is a universal language, but the ocean gives us our specific voice," he says.

“Cooking in Tonga teaches you the deepest respect for ingredients, because you can never take availability for granted—it requires ultimate flexibility.

“Bringing this spirit to Auckland is an honour and my goal is to put Tonga firmly on the global culinary map and show the next generation of Pacific chefs that the passion and resilience of the Blue Continent truly belong on the global stage.”