

Newly Opened ENVI Paje Names Karen De Villiers Executive Chef in Zanzibar

DUBAI, DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, August 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ENVI Paje, the newly opened barefoot luxury and wellness lodge on the powder-white sands of Paje Beach, has named Karen De Villiers as its Executive Chef. At the barefoot luxury and wellness lodge, food is part of the wellness - an expression of place, season and care. At the heart of the kitchen is Executive Chef Karen De Villiers, whose philosophy comes down to a single word: satisfied.

Trained in both savoury cooking and patisserie - a rare, complete skillset rooted in a childhood spent watching her grandmother craft intricate wedding cakes and picking vegetables from her father's garden - Karen brings balance and care to every plate. "From the start of my career, I wanted to understand how flavours work together," she explains. "For me it is not just cooking, it is about seeing the satisfaction on people's faces. Being able to appreciate both sweet and savoury makes it easier to create a balanced meal that leaves you satisfied."



What defines her cooking is Zanzibar itself. Known as 'Spice Island' and often compared to the world's blue zones, it offers sun-ripened tropical fruit, ocean-fresh seafood and aromatic spices in abundance, and Karen lets the island and its seasons lead rather than imposing a fixed menu. "It is incredible to have so many fresh ingredients available," she says. "It inspires me to be creative with what is in front of me. The menu is designed to be flexible to what the seasons offer."

Sustainability is built into how the kitchen runs. Where possible, ingredients are sourced locally, with ENVI Paje's own garden soon to bring the harvest closer still, and nothing goes to waste. Surplus becomes homemade pickles, preserves and jams, from watermelon and lime preserve to passionfruit skin marmalade and tomato chilli jam. When gluten-free flour proved impossible to find on the island, Karen simply milled her own from cashew nuts, lentils and chickpeas. That

hands-on spirit extends to guests, who can join in bread making, pickling, seashell hunting and essential-oil making, each a way to taste and take home a piece of the island.

It runs through her signature daily muffin as well: free from refined sugar and artificial sweeteners, and made with some of Zanzibar's most nourishing local ingredients, baobab, moringa and ashwagandha, for a guilt-free treat that is genuinely good for the body. The result is a dining experience designed to nourish without overwhelming, with plates made for sharing. Among the dishes that best capture her philosophy are the octopus salad, cool and refreshing, and the Mharage vegetable curry, warming and grounding, two sides of a menu where every dish tells the same story.

For General Manager Daniel Morariu, having Karen shape the kitchen from the very beginning has been central to shaping the identity of the newly opened property. "Chef Karen embodies everything ENVI Paje stands for, a deep respect for the island, its ingredients and its rhythms," he says. "Her cooking is fresh, intentional and full of heart, and gives our guests a true taste of Zanzibar."

Chef Karen's kitchen is one part of a wider experience. ENVI Paje is a beachfront collection of private-pool villas that open straight onto the sand, its signature a suite of science-based wellness therapies, from hyperbaric oxygen, red light and PEMF to cold plunge and IV therapy, designed to support deep recovery and lasting vitality alongside traditional spa treatments. Together with Karen's wholesome, locally sourced cooking, wellness at ENVI Paje is woven into every part of the guest experience, including the dining.

For more information about ENVI Paje, follow @envipaje. Bookings can be made at www.envilodges.com/paje

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Press Kit:

Editorial images of Chef Karen are available here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1_QbXR_0C877RQpTYo0CTIBCu7lqU-5Eq?usp=drive_link

The full ENVI Paje press kit is available here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16HPyga-W68AcEIYDUo-k3gx64HkisHcr?usp=drive_link

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About ENVI Lodges

ENVI Lodges is a wellbeing-driven outdoor hospitality brand, managing immersive natural retreats that restore guests through their connection to the environment. ENVI's lodges comprise individual units, villas, safari tents and pods, designed to immerse guests directly in the landscape. The brand's approach to wellbeing adapts to what that landscape offers. The principle stays constant: restoration comes from nature itself. This is supported by ENVI's seven sustainability pillars, which govern everything from the mindful use of resources to support for local communities and the enhancement of biodiversity, ensuring that guest wellbeing and ecosystem health are treated as one system. ENVI's approach to wellbeing is holistic and alternative, found through immersion, stillness, and a deep sense of place. With upcoming openings planned for 2027 across Saudi Arabia and Oman, ENVI Lodges continues to expand its footprint in extraordinary natural landscapes.

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