

‘Veganism is not limited to the West’: Meet The Vegan Nigerian

It’s been on the rise worldwide, but veganism is nothing new, with many cultures embracing plant-based food for generations.

Pursuing a vegan lifestyle can often involve finding new ways to approach traditional food and experiment with dishes, making sure meat-free isn’t missing out on fun or flavour.

Tomi Makanjuola, aka The Nigerian Vegan, is reimagining tradition through her food by veganising Nigerian cuisine for the world, and we’re loving it!

A food writer, blogger, and chef, Tomi’s currently based in London, where she hosts cooking classes, does pop-up restaurant events, and food festivals.

Tomi has been vegan for over nine years, and started her blog around the same time, initially as a way of anonymously documenting her journey.

She says: “I began to see the blog as a really great resource for people who may be curious about the lifestyle and might want to find out more.

“I definitely became more intentional about it, more consistent with my content, and just very open to the idea of letting it evolve and reach a wider audience.”

Just take a look at some of the dishes she’s posted and I’m sure you wouldn’t mind going vegan if it meant eating like this every day!



Tomi was born and raised in Lagos before moving to the UK as a teen. Studying at the University of Oxford, she decided to ditch the meat while doing an internship in France during her third year.

She recalls: “It was of course such a huge transition for me, and trying to navigate that as someone who had grown up eating in a very specific way and not wanting to give up on any of my cultural foods and all the meals I enjoyed.”

Nigerian food is just as multi-layered as the country, with over 215 million people and 300 ethnic groups!



While a lot of Nigerian dishes have a meat element, like stews, jollof rice and chicken, or meat pies, the misconception that it's hard to go vegan within Nigerian culture is something Tomi's been working hard to change.

She says: “A lot of our staple meals are made up of root vegetables. We have our yams, root cassava, sweet potatoes, we have our leafy green vegetables which are cooked in a variety of different ways.”

Still, it can be a challenge to curb bias around food.

Tomi adds: “I've definitely been met with a bit of scepticism from the [Nigerian] community. Just a lot of doubt as to how good the food really is, how easy and accessible the lifestyle is.

“Even on a personal note with my family, having debates about veganism especially in the early times, the debates sort of escalated and got a bit out of hand, you know!”



Tomi's latest cookbook, *Vegan Nigerian Kitchen*, hit shelves in November, inspiring readers around the globe with 100 Nigerian recipes reinvented for a plant-based diet.

On *Vegan Nigerian Kitchen*, Tomi says: "It's been a labour of love but really fun, and it's something I'm really proud of. And I feel like anyone who picks up the book can sort of get a snapshot of what our cuisine is all about, and learn quite a lot of unique recipes as well."

Recipes include:

- **Akara (fried bean fritters)**
- **Efo egusi (a spinach and melon seed stew)**
- **Plantain Fufu (pounded plantain into a kind of dough)**
- **Yam Porridge**

And lots more – but you'll have to find the book to try them yourself!

On her main target for *Vegan Nigerian Kitchen* Tomi says:

"When I decided to create and launch the cookbook, I kind of had two audiences in mind. One of course would be Nigerians or West Africans who wanted a sort of 'in' way to vegan cooking and vegan cuisine but were not wanting to give up on anything [from home]. So for anyone on the

journey of transitioning to a vegan or plant-based diet, I wanted the book to be a sort of handbook in that way for them.

“And then I thought of the wider vegan audience and how I just think having diversity within that space is just amazing, because we know now that veganism is not limited to the west, like we have so many vegan friendly dishes around the world. Whether it’s Nigerian food, Indian food, Jamaican, or whatever.

“So I wanted the Vegan Nigerian Kitchen to be a part of that discussion to show people the variety of foods that exist, and to show them the beauty of Nigerian food specifically.”

Through her blog and ***Vegan Nigerian Kitchen***, Tomi brings forth the excitement of both Nigerian cuisine, and veganism to those less familiar- the kind of adventure you can embark on from the comfort of your home! Be sure to check out her website and Instagram to follow what she’s up to:

Website: <https://www.vegannigerian.com/p/store.html>

IG: @VeganNigerian

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