

# FEAST *for the* SENSES

*Welcome to the wonderful world of Woolwich-born foodie Zoe Adjonyoh, who is bringing Ghanaian sounds and flavours to London*

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**Y**ou may well have sampled Zoe Adjonyoh's legendarily aromatic jollof fried chicken with moreish hot pepper mayo if you've ever ventured to Zoe's Ghana Kitchen in Pop Brixton, or been lucky enough to attend one of her supper clubs. For too long, she says, Ghanaians have kept their incredible food a greedy secret.

Now, the pioneering foodie has published her first cookbook, bringing new flavours into your kitchen at home, too. Adjonyoh encourages creativity, as well as providing handy cheat sheets for go-to spice mixes. Championing culture as well as cuisine, she has also created soundtracks both to cook and eat to (for a taster, check out the playlist on Spotify).

She's not stopping there. Having just embarked on a residency at The Sun & 13 Cantons in Soho and appeared on *Friday Night Feast* and *Sunday Brunch*, Adjonyoh is hoping to open up at least one other spot this year, and to appear more often on our television screens.

'I don't want people to think this is just a trend,' she insists when we catch up in Brixton. 'I want to shout about how amazing the food is, and encourage people to interact with it, in the same way that they might have Mexican or Indian food once a week.' Those who are lazier in the kitchen, I am pleased to discover, can also order it in from UberEATS or Deliveroo.

Ghanaian cuisine is just the start of her culinary journey.



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The desserts are full of exotic fruits like papaya and mango

‘Beyond that, I want to look at representing a wider African offering in the menu,’ she reveals tentatively. ‘I don’t know how much I can say, but I’ve got lots of ideas to do with exploring different regions other than Ghana. I hate the word pan-African, but it’s probably the most appropriate.’

Would she say that the appetite for global and African cuisine in London is growing? ‘Absolutely,’ she affirms, galvanised. ‘It’s been a long time coming. We’ve been on the cusp for a long time and now it’s finally tipped over. There’s lots of great new street food outlets, and everybody is waving the flag for different countries. I’m really happy to see it. We need more of that. More test concepts will hopefully lead to new restaurants further down the line, and a change in the overall demographic of the high street.

‘I want to champion African food in general, not just Ghanaian. I’ve got so much love and respect for all the different cultures, and I feel passionate about sharing all of it. The more attention we can give to Senegalese food or cuisine from Sierra Leone or Nigeria or wherever it is, the better.’

Adjonyoh is confident in her concept, and rightly so. The food speaks for itself. A comforting groundnut soup, a sweet and spicy peanut stew



Foodies flock to Adjonyoh's semi-permanent outpost at Pop Brixton for spiced plantain pancakes, popcorn chicken and okra fries



Growing up in Woolwich, Adjonyoh began cooking at home with her Ghanaian father, who sourced West African ingredients locally



with pounded yam, is one of her personal favourites. There's also the lesser-known, meaty tilapia fish on the menu, marinated in fresh lime and cayenne pepper, pan-fried in baobab-infused butter and served with wilted spinach. Wash it all down with Nari Palm Juice, a nectar of coconut palm sap infused with either lemon and ginger or apple and mint, or with a Sobolo Cooler – an infusion of hibiscus flowers, fresh ginger, cinnamon and star anise.

Adjonyoh's dad is Ghanaian, while her mum is Irish. Growing up, her dad would frequently cook a handful of dishes with unusual ingredients, which piqued her interest. 'I've always loved cooking for friends, and it was also a way for me to be close to my dad,' she explains. 'I realised over time that it was also a really good way to connect with that ancestry, that heritage. We didn't have any other Ghanaian family in London, so I wasn't immersed in the culture growing up.' It was serving stew in an open warehouse studio at Hackney WickED Arts festival where Zoe's Ghana Kitchen as we know it today took root, and 'took on a life of its own'.

Her ultimate goal, she emphasises, is to see a 'radical change' on the high street. 'When I was young, other than



Adjonyoh's famous jollof dry spice mix will be a welcome addition to your cupboard



The hearty, spicy food is particularly well-suited to sharing with friends along with a side order of music and beers

Pizza Hut, Woolwich High Street wasn't really a foodie destination, but it did have a significant migrant population from West Africa, so it was easy to get hold of ingredients like kenkey, yams and plantain. Now, it's changing and evolving, and there's young professionals and a lot more students. I would hope to open somewhere there one day – it's on my radar.

'The big thing is for people not to be frightened, and think they won't be able to get the ingredients. There's lots of alternatives listed, and you walk past the ingredients all the time in London. The book is about getting creative and using them in every day cooking. Half of the recipes are super traditional and the other half are more modern, and reimagine new ways to use them.'

There's no doubt that it's #GhanaBeTasty...

*Half of the recipes are traditional, and the other half reimagine new ways to use the ingredients*



Visit [zoeshghanakitchen.co.uk](http://zoeshghanakitchen.co.uk) to find out more and to order your copy of Zoe Adjonyoh's new cookbook