

A JOURNEY THROUGH UGANDA

1. Eshabwe

Eshabwe is a ghee sauce that came from the Banyankole people in southwestern Uganda, near Mbarara. The Banyankole are known for the long horned cows they keep and are famous for their dairy products, including ghee, eshabwe and bongo.

To make ghee, milk which has been lactating for at least a month is put into a smoked calabash. After 12 hours when the milk has become thick, it is shaken for 30 minutes to an hour. This shaking process is called okucunda, and is done mostly by women and girls, who sit down on the floor and rotate the calabash on their laps. Traditionally, the girls had to keep silent because it was believed that talking would make the eshabwe turn out poor.

Eshabwe is made by mixing the ghee with rock salt until the ghee turns from yellow to white. Eshabwe is reserved for high profile guests at parties and traditional weddings. It can be eaten by adding into ready food like katogo, or with small pieces of dried beef, or just as a sauce on its own.

2. Malewa

Malewa originated from Eastern Uganda in the Bugisu sub-region. Malewa is smoked bamboo shoot which is air-dried and smoked for preservation. There are many bamboo trees that grow in the wild in eastern Uganda around Mt. Elgon. However, their quantities are decreasing due to encroachment on the mountainside for settlements and agricultural land, and it is harder to find them at the local markets nowadays.

It is a major part of ceremonies in Bugisu e.g. Mbalu (circumcision). Before young Ugandan boys would engage in a week-long journey as part of their adult passage rites, their mothers would serve this sauce to make them brave. It is mixed with salt and groundnut sauce to make a tasty sauce which can be enjoyed with matooke, sweet potatoes or cassava.

3. Firinda

Firinda is deeply rooted in the Batooro and Banyoro culture in Fort Portal and Hoima. Every party associated with Tooro traditions is graced with Firinda. If the meal is not served, the guests will go back home complaining. Pet names commonly known as Empaako are important in Tooto and Bunyoro. If you have a pet name that was not given at a function where Firinda and millet were served, the Batooro say that your pet name is fake.

Firinda is made of beans whose skins are peeled. Then, the beans are boiled and mashed with some onions. The process is laborious and therefore firinda is usually reserved for weddings. It is usually served with smoked meat and eaten with millet bread.

4. Rolex

Rolex is a popular Ugandan street food, consisting of an omelette rolled up in a chapati. It originated in the eastern town of Busoga and spreaded all over the country. It derived its name from a play on the words "Rolled eggs". Setting up a roadside rolex stall is a popular small business in Uganda. You can almost find one everywhere you go, no matter in cities or villages.

5. Molokoni

Molokoni is a slow-cooked cow hoof soup. It is served in the kafunda joints of Kampala and other cities in Uganda. Many Ugandan men love this dish. You can see them sitting on benches in the busy streets and enjoying this dish with their hands. Molokoni is usually served with cassava. In Buganda, it is called kigere, which literally means foot, but the Luo call it molokony. The common notion is that the dish originated from either the Acholi in northern Uganda or the Itesot in eastern Uganda.

6. Angara

Angara is loved by the Alur speaking people in Nebbi, Zombo and Pakwach districts in the West Nile region. It is a special kind of fish that is preserved in salt. The Angara fish is said to help treat malnutrition in children. Children are normally encouraged to drink Angara soup because of the salt in it. It is also specially preserved for elders and visitors and some use the fish for treating smallpox.

Angara is only found on Albert Nile possibly because it is less saline than Victoria Nile. It is for this reason that most people traveling to and from the West Nile region make a stop-over in Pakwach town near Pakwach Bridge, along the Albert Nile in Pakwach district to buy the salted fish. Interestingly, girls or boys who are born in Pakwach are often nicknamed Nyar Angara (child of Angara) or Wod Angara (son of Angara). It is locally believed that if you do not eat Angara, then you cannot be intelligent.

7. Luwombo

Luwombo is introduced by the Baganda and is a unique mixture of sauce enveloped in a banana leaf and then steamed over a fire for hours. There are four main types of sauce-chicken, groundnuts, beef and mushroom. Banana leaf is the main part of the Luwombo and banana fiber is used to tie it. Luwombo is found in traditional ceremonies such as introduction (okwanjula), visitations (okukyala), thanksgiving and celebrating twins (okumala abalongo). The introduction ceremony is where the groom visits the bride's home to meet her parents. At the ceremony, the in-laws serve luwombo to the groom.

8. Katogo

Katogo is a staple which is cooked in the same pot with a sauce. It originated from Buganda and Western Uganda. There is no exact chronology as to when Ugandans started cooking katogo, but as long as matooke has been around, so has katogo. The popularity of katogo quickly spread all over Uganda and to date there are many variations of the cuisine. The staple can be matooke, Irish potatoes, cassava or sweet potatoes, and the sauce can be beef, offal, beans, peas, groundnuts or greens.

9. Fried Banana and Bongo

Uganda is known to grow more than 50 varieties of bananas. It produces an estimated four million metric tonnes of banana every year and is the most important banana producing country in Africa. Ugandans eat 600 pounds of bananas per capita per year! Bananas are used as a primary source of food, beer, wine, flour, cosmetics, and also waragi, the local gin.

Bongo is a traditional fermented drink made from milk, i.e. yogurt. It is primarily consumed among cattle rearing communities in Uganda, such as Bahima and Karamajong, but its consumption has spread to other communities as well.

WEEBALE NNYO!

THANK YOU!