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THE GUARDIAN

Life

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What's Popping?

Your weekly guide to the best of Nigeria

SUIT YOURSELF!
NEW WAYS TO WEAR ASO OKE

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Habits affecting your skincare routine

KING SUNNY ADÉ:

My unfinished dream at 80

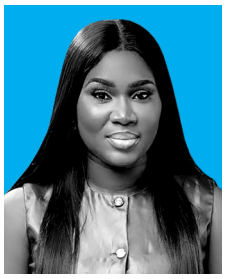
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THE GUARDIAN **Life**

Everything you need to live well



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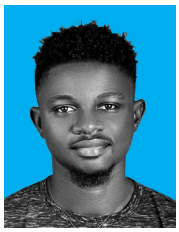












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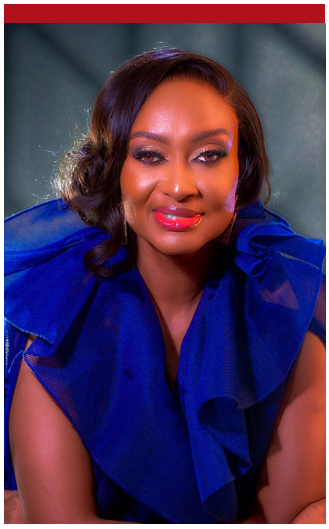
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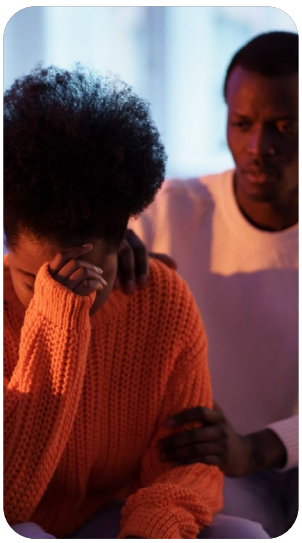
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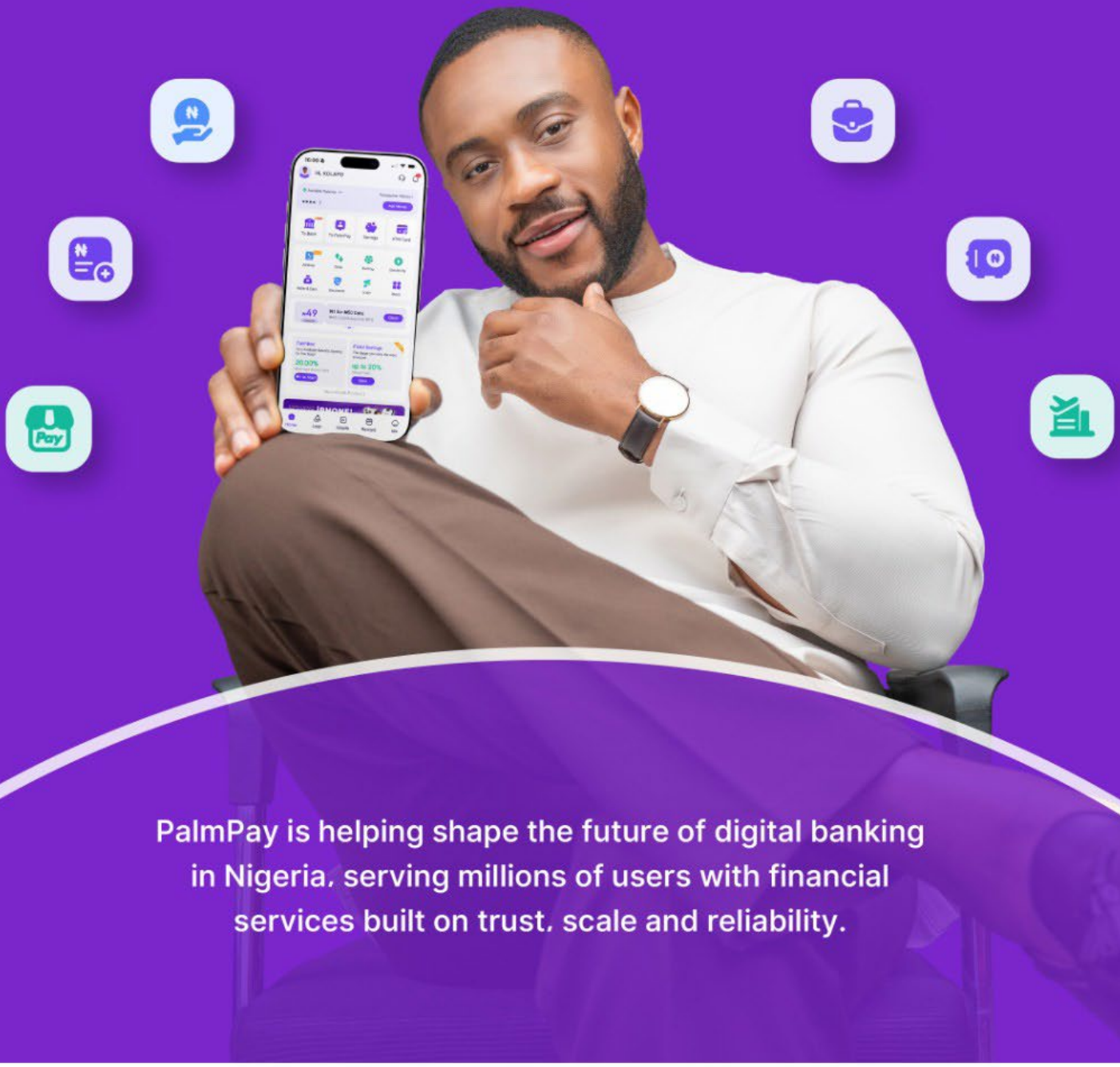
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Protective styles for *healthier* hair

by Dorcas Ayoola



Taking care of your hair doesn't mean you have to wear it loose or skip styling altogether. The right hairstyle can give your hair a rest from daily combing, heat, and handling while still keeping you looking polished.

Protective styles are especially valuable for people with textured or natural hair, since they can cut down on breakage and support length retention when they're installed and cared for the right way.

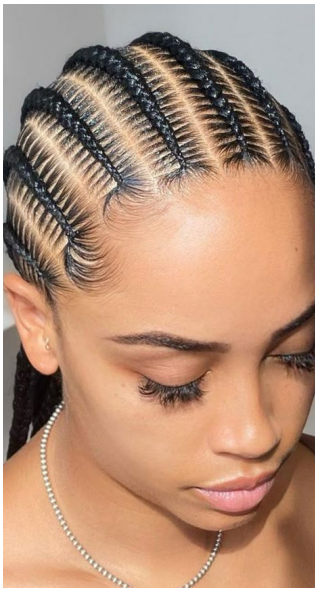
A low-maintenance style does not automatically make it protective. Also, avoiding too much tension, keeping the scalp clean, and giving your hair breaks between installations all matter just as much as the style itself. Here's a closer look at seven go-to choices for protective styling.



Braids

Knotless braids, box braids, and shorter plaited styles can save you from combing and restyling your hair every day. That break from constant handling is part of their appeal.

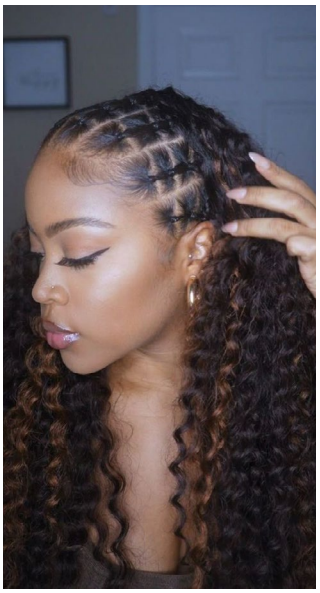
But braids only help when they are gentle on your hair. If they hurt, pull at your edges, or feel too heavy, speak up while they are being done. Keep your scalp clean, care for the hair underneath, and take the braids out before they become difficult to manage.



Cornrows

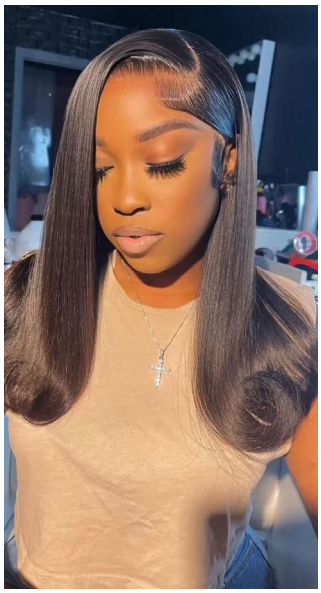
Cornrows are created by braiding the hair close to the scalp in straight rows or more detailed patterns. They keep the hair in place, reduce daily combing, and can also serve as a base for wigs.

They are a practical choice for anyone who wants a neat, low-maintenance style. However, cornrows that feel painful or pull at the hairline are too tight. Gentle installation and regular scalp care can help reduce breakage and protect the edges.



Crochet Styles

Crochet styles begin with the natural hair braided into cornrows. A stylist then uses a crochet needle to loop extensions through the braided base, creating curls, twists or added volume. Because the natural hair stays tucked away, the style can reduce daily combing and restyling. However, the cornrows should not feel tight, and the extensions should not be too heavy. Keeping the scalp clean and caring for the hair underneath are also important, as hiding the hair does not remove the need for regular care.



Wigs

Wigs offer an easy way to change your hairstyle without cutting, colouring or applying heat to your natural hair. When worn properly, they can also reduce daily combing and styling. However, the hair underneath still needs regular care. Avoid tight cornrows, clean your hair and scalp, and remove the wig regularly for washing and inspection. Adhesives should be applied and removed carefully, as repeated pulling or glue placed directly on the hairline can irritate the skin and damage the edges.

Locs

These are sections of hair that are encouraged to mat and coil together over time into permanent, rope-like strands. Locs eliminate the need for daily detangling and restyling, making them one of the most low-maintenance long-term options once mature.

Often chosen as a long-term commitment tied to personal style or growth goals. Locs still need regular care, gentle retwisting, and good scalp hygiene since retwisting too tightly can stress the roots.





Micro Links

Small sections of extension hair attached to the natural hair using tiny silicone-lined rings, without glue or heat. This is because no heat or adhesive is involved, micro links can be gentler on the hair than some other extension methods, while still adding length and volume.

This is best suited for people wanting a natural-looking, long-lasting style; this method usually calls for a trained stylist due to the precision needed for even, comfortable placement.

Sister Locs

A thinner, more uniform version of traditional locs, installed using an interlocking technique for a sleeker finish. It's like traditional locs; sister locs reduce daily manipulation once established, but their finer size gives more styling versatility.

A choice for those wanting the low-maintenance benefits of locs with a more refined look. Starting and maintaining them typically requires a skilled loctician, given how much precision the thin, even sections demand.



Choosing the right protective style

Protective styling can make hair care easier, but the style itself is only part of the picture. How it's installed, maintained, and eventually removed plays just as big a role in whether it actually benefits your hair.

A good protective style shouldn't cause ongoing pain, excessive pulling, or irritation. Giving your hair and scalp time to recover between styles, staying on top of moisture, and avoiding too much tension all help prevent unnecessary damage.

Whether you go with braids, cornrows, crochet, wigs, locs, micro links, or sister locs, the real goal is more than just looking good; it's choosing a style that lets your natural hair underneath stay strong while you enjoy a stylish, low-maintenance look.

Photo credit: Pexels



King Sunny Adé:

My unfinished dream at 80

by Musa Adekunle



NEED TO KNOW

- Chief Sunday Adeniyi Adegeye, popularly known as King Sunny Adé, is a singer, guitarist and jùjú music icon who turned 80 on September 22, 2026.
- He began his career with Moses Olaiya's Federal Rhythm Dandies before forming the Green Spots in 1967, later renamed African Beats.
- After signing with Island Records and releasing *Jùjú* Music in 1982, his global success led international media to bill him as "the African Bob Marley."
- *Synchro System* made him the first Nigerian artiste nominated for a Grammy Award, while Odu earned him a second nomination.
- His honours include the MFR and inductions into the Afropop, Hard Rock Café and Headies halls of fame.



King Sunny Adé's music has followed generations through weddings, family gatherings and dance floors across Nigeria and beyond. Now 80, the jùjú legend remains defined by the guitar, movement and unmistakable sound that made him a household name.

Fame brought global stages, awards and admiration, but it also took away ordinary freedom and precious moments with his family. Behind the colourful performances stands a man who spent much of his life balancing public expectations with private sacrifices.

Age has not separated him from music. His days now move at a quieter pace, filled with prayer, family, mentoring and work on his archives, which contain unreleased recordings made across Lagos, London and Nashville.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with *Guardian Life*, King Sunny Adé talks about turning 80, the price of fame, family, growing older, unreleased music, the future of jùjú and more.

> *"I only wanted to make people dance and forget their sorrows."*
>
> — SUNNY ADÉ

You turned 80 on Tuesday. When you look back at your life, what makes you most proud?

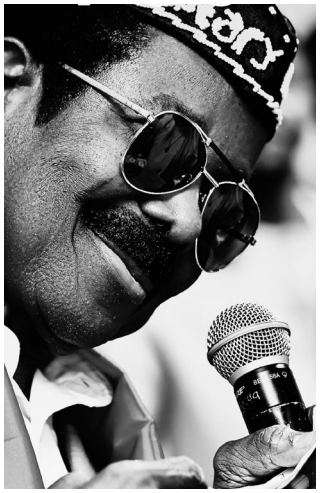
Looking back, what fills my heart with the deepest gratitude and pride is not just the awards, the global tours, or the titles; it is the grace of longevity and the ability to touch millions of souls across generations. When I started as a young boy leaving Ondo for Lagos with dreams in my heart, I only wanted to make people dance and forget their sorrows. To see that same music crossing borders, uniting families, and remaining relevant for over six decades is a testament to God's grace. I am most proud that I stayed true to my roots, my culture, and my people, and that the sound we laboured to build has become an enduring global treasure.

Was there a personal price you paid for becoming King Sunny Adé?

Everything in life has a price, and success demands sacrifice. The heaviest price I paid was the loss of ordinary freedom and private moments. When you belong to the public, your time, your space, and even your peace become shared property. In the prime of my career, I missed many intimate family milestones: birthdays, quiet evenings at home, and watching my children grow in those fleeting early years because I was either in the studio or on a plane to another continent. But looking back, I realise those sacrifices were the seeds of the joy we are celebrating today.

Do you remember the first moment you realised music would no longer be a struggle for survival, but your life's work?

It happened in the mid-1960s, shortly after I left Moses Olaiya's Federal Rhythm Dandies and formed my own band, which eventually became the African Beats. For a long time, music was daily survival: playing in small clubs in Lagos, wondering where the next meal or instrument repair money would come from. But there was a night at a packed venue where the crowd did not just dance; they listened attentively to every lyric, hanging on every word of the talking drum and the guitar lines.



> *"The heaviest price I paid was the loss of ordinary freedom and private moments."*
>
> — SUNNY ADÉ

In that exact moment, I felt a divine shift. I realised God had given me a voice and a mission that went far beyond entertainment. It was my calling.

You have spent more than 60 years performing. Which period tested you most and nearly made you walk away from music?

The early 1970s, right after the Nigerian Civil War, were economically and structurally challenging. Building a massive live band with over twenty members, managing logistics, paying salaries, and maintaining equipment without modern infrastructure was an uphill battle. There were moments of profound exhaustion when financial promoters let us down, or government policies shifted unpredictably. But walking away was never a real option because music is in my blood. Whenever I picked up my Fender guitar and stepped on stage, all the frustration melted away in the warmth of the audience's love.

> *"In the prime of my career, I missed many intimate family milestones: birthdays, evenings at home, and watching my children grow in those fleeting early years because I was either in the studio or on a plane to another continent."*
>
> — SUNNY ADÉ

When Island Records introduced you to the world, were there expectations that you would become Africa's next Bob Marley?

When Chris Blackwell and Island Records signed me in the early 1980s following Bob Marley's passing, the Western media and music executives certainly looked at me through that lens. They wanted an African global superstar who could fill that specific slot. I had immense respect for Bob Marley and what he did for reggae; he was a brother in the African music liberation. However, I never tried to be anyone else. I told them: "I am not the next Bob Marley; I am the first King Sunny Adé." I brought Yoruba polyrhythms, the pedal steel guitar, and the talking drum—a completely different sonic spiritual energy.

What has life taught you about success, family, happiness and growing older?

At 80, the noise of the world fades, and the truths remain. Life has taught me that true success is not measured by the numbers in your bank account, but by the peace in your mind and the legacy of music you leave behind 'You see my own son Emperor Adé taking up the legacy… oh, what a blessing'

Family is the ultimate anchor; they are the ones who stay when the applause stops. Happiness is a daily choice of contentment, gratitude, and forgiveness, while growing older is a rare privilege denied to many. Age brings wisdom, patience, and the ability to see the hand of God in both the triumphs and the trials.

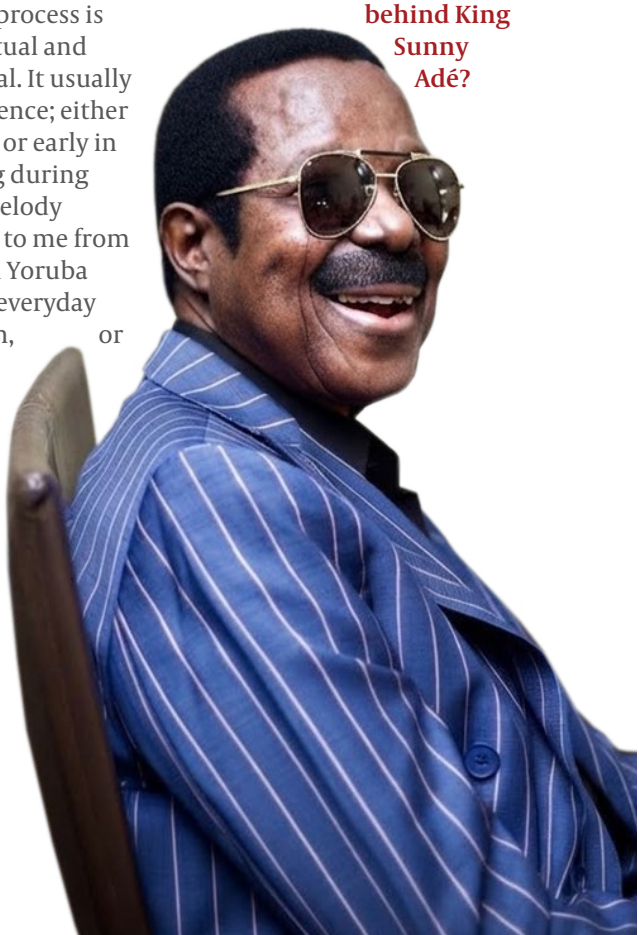
You built your career before streaming, social media and major international companies entered Nigeria. What business decision protected you most, and which decision cost you the most?

The single most protective business decision I made was establishing my own record label, Sunny Alade Records, and retaining control over my masters and production. In an era where many artistes were exploited by middlemen, owning our infrastructure gave us independence. As for what cost me the most? Early in my career, I trusted handshakes and verbal agreements over ironclad legal contracts when expanding into international territories. That naively cost us revenue and rights in certain foreign markets before we learned to navigate global corporate boardrooms.

What is your creative process like?

My creative process is deeply spiritual and observational. It usually begins in silence; either late at night or early in the morning during prayers. A melody might come to me from a traditional Yoruba proverb, an everyday conversation, or a rhythm tapped out by the gangan (talking drum). Once the concept forms, I pick up my guitar, map out the intervallic scales, and bring the band together for a rehearsal. In jùjú music, arrangement is organic; I sketch the blueprint, but I give my band members the freedom to improvise and pour their own craft into the groove.

Your music carries praise, proverbs, history and social commentary. Which song tells the truest story of the man behind King Sunny Adé?



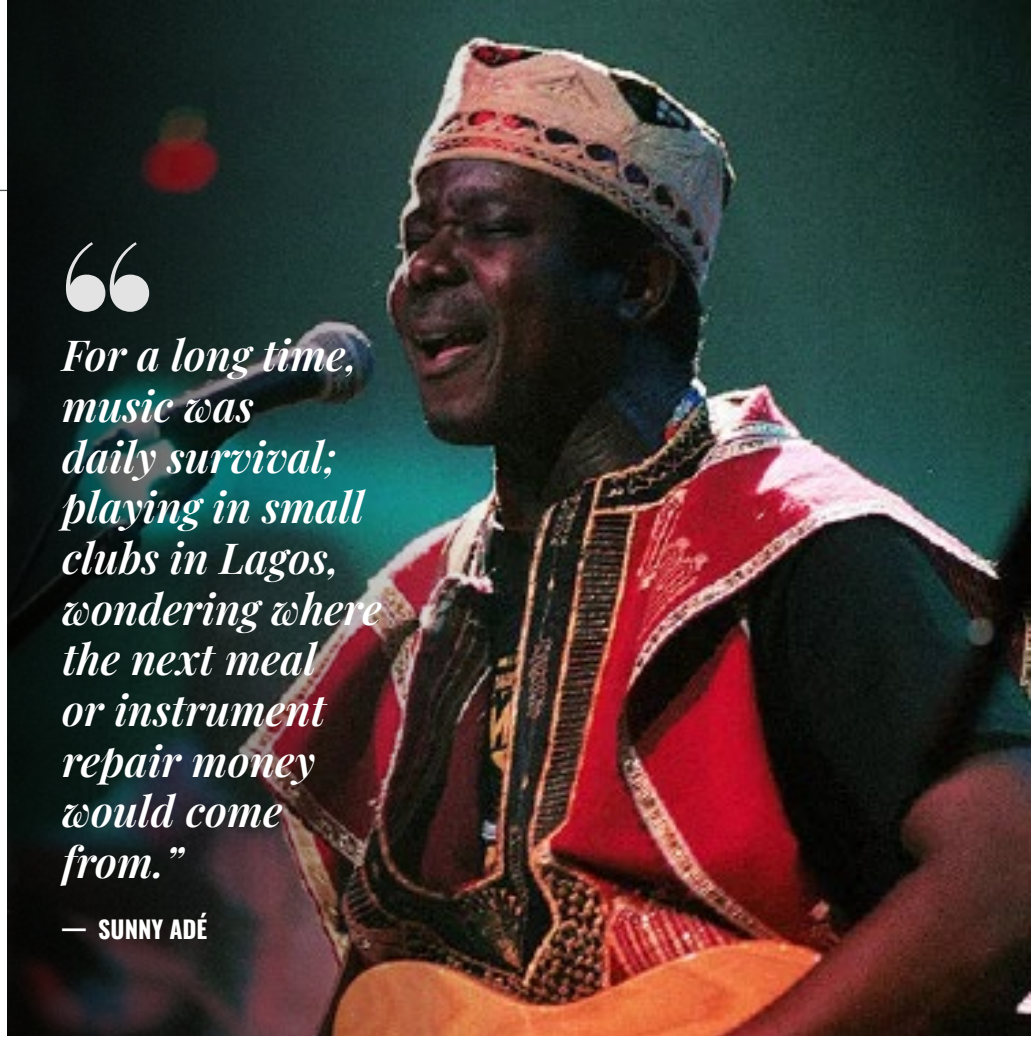
That is a difficult question because my songs are chapters of my life diary. But if I have to choose one, it would be *Ja Funmi* (Fight for me/ Pray for me). It is a universal prayer disguised as a dance rhythm. It reflects my foundational belief that human effort is nothing without divine backing. Whenever I sing it, I am speaking directly to my maker, acknowledging my vulnerabilities, my journey, and my constant need for spiritual protection.

You and Chief Commander Ebenezer Obey dominated jùjú music for decades. Away from the public rivalry, what did his success push you to do differently?

People loved to frame our relationship as a fierce war, but Commander Ebenezer Obey and I were partners in elevating jùjú music. His brilliance, philosophical depth, and melodic arrangements pushed me never to rest on my laurels. Whenever I released a masterpiece, it challenged him in the studio to think bigger; we both wrote deeper lyrics and innovated the jùjù genre. That healthy rivalry was iron sharpening iron. Without his presence, jùjú music might not have reached the sophisticated heights it achieved in Nigeria.

Nigerian music has become a global force, but jùjú music no longer commands the place it once held among young listeners, except yours. Where did the genre lose the new generation?

Jùjú music didn't die; it evolved into the DNA of modern Afrobeats, which actually means African Beats.... However, the traditional business model of jùjú - massive live bands with twenty to thirty musicians, lengthy improvisational suites, and complex acoustic instrumentation - became economically heavy in a digital age that favours quick, three-minute electronic tracks. The youth moved toward instant gratification and digital production. To win them back, younger artists must embrace the discipline of live performance craft and storytelling, merging our acoustic heritage with modern production without losing our cultural heritage.



After the awards, world tours and applause, what part of your life still feels unfinished?

One of my remaining ambitions is to establish a fully equipped, world-class institution and archive for African musicology, specifically to preserve the history, instruments, and performance techniques of traditional Nigerian sounds. I have started to build a sanctuary where young, gifted instrumentalists and writers can be trained not just to make hits, but to master their craft, understand copyright and business, and carry the torch of live performance into the future.

Is there an unreleased song or unfinished project you still want the world to hear?

Yes, absolutely. In my vaults, sitting on old multi-track analogue tapes from our sessions in London, Lagos, and Nashville, are dozens of unreleased recordings. Some are experimental fusion tracks where we blended jùjú with Caribbean and Latin rhythms back in the late 1980s. Before my race is run, I intend the world to hear another side of our creative journeys

What does a typical day in your life look like now, and how has your daily routine changed at 80?

My day now begins much quieter than it used to. I wake up early, spend quality time in devotion and prayer, thanking God for the gift of life. I take gentle walks, check in on my family, my children, and my business ventures, and spend hours listening to music or reviewing archival projects. Music is still my constant companion, and I am actively involved in mentoring and guiding the younger generation.

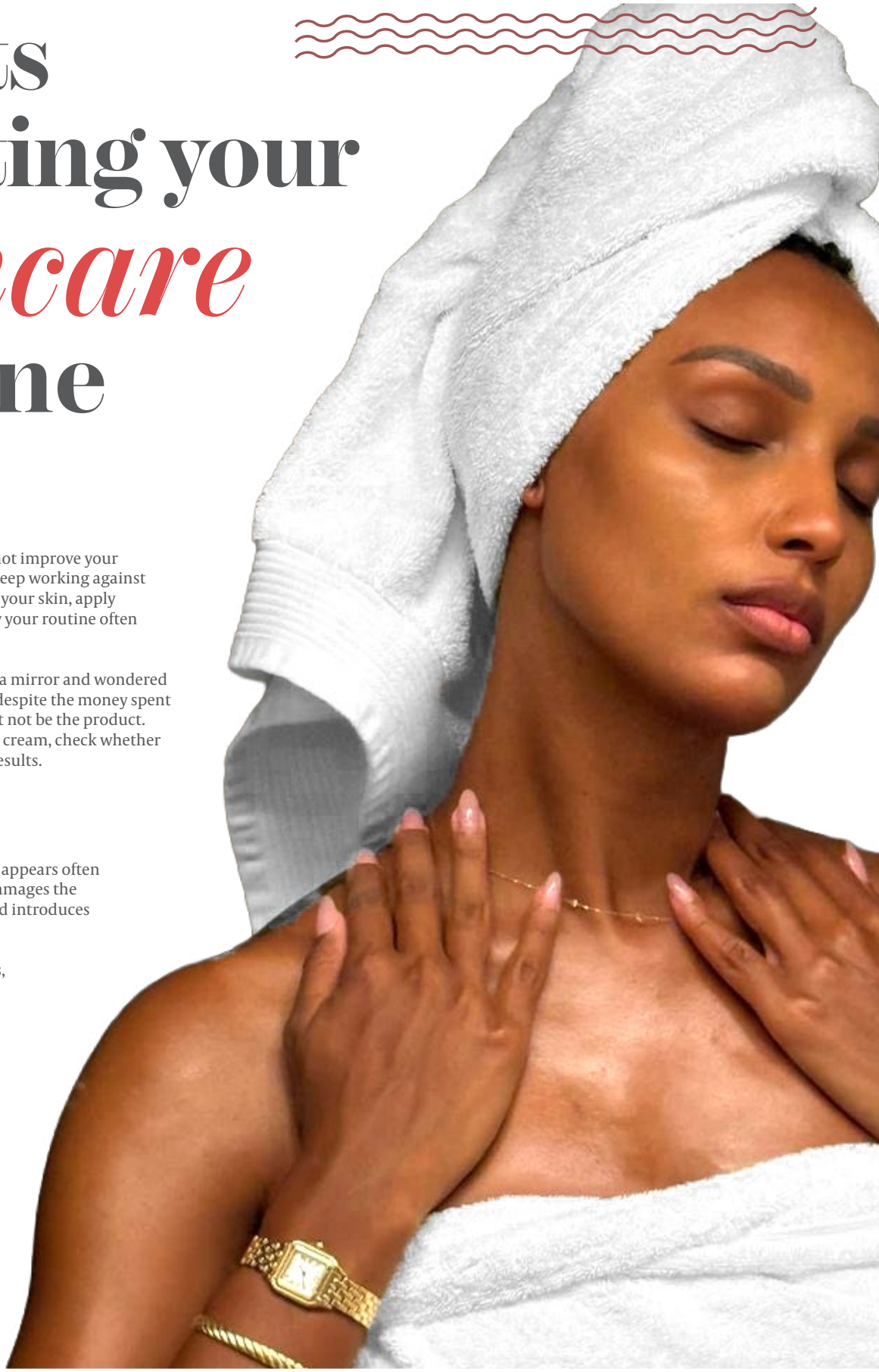
When people look back on your life many years from now, what do you hope they will understand about the man behind King Sunny Adé?

I want them to understand that Sunday Adeniyi Adegeye was simply a vessel used by God to bring joy, healing, and cultural pride to humanity.

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Habits affecting your *skincare* routine

by Dorcas Ayoola



Expensive products will not improve your skin when daily habits keep working against them. The way you treat your skin, apply each product and follow your routine often determines the result.

You have probably stood before a mirror and wondered why your skin was not clearing despite the money spent on products. The problem might not be the product. Before buying another serum or cream, check whether these habits are affecting your results.

Picking at your skin

Squeezing a pimple as soon as it appears often worsens the problem. Picking damages the skin, increases inflammation and introduces bacteria.

It also leaves dark marks or scars, especially when you repeatedly touch the same area. Instead of squeezing a spot, use an appropriate acne treatment containing salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide. Speak with a dermatologist if the breakouts persist or become painful.

Giving up too quickly

Skincare products rarely produce instant results. Some require several weeks of regular use before visible changes appear. Switching products every few days makes it difficult to know what works for your skin.

Retinoids, vitamin C and niacinamide all need time, although results depend on the product, concentration and skin type. Introduce new products gradually, follow the directions and stop using any product that causes severe irritation, swelling or burning.



Buying counterfeit products

Fake skincare products often resemble the originals. The packaging, labels and seals might look convincing, but their contents are often unsafe.

Counterfeit products sometimes contain unknown ingredients or incorrect concentrations that cause irritation, breakouts, allergic reactions or burns. Buy from the brand's official website or an authorised retailer.

Check the packaging, batch number and expiry date. An unusually low price is also a warning sign.



Ignoring pillowcases and phones

Your pillowcase collects sweat, oil, dead skin cells and product residue, while your phone screen regularly touches your hands and face. Dirty surfaces irritate the skin and worsen existing breakouts. Wash your pillowcase regularly, clean your phone screen carefully and avoid pressing it against your face for long periods. Also remove your makeup and cleanse your face before sleeping.

Following trends instead of your skin

A viral product might work for someone else and still be unsuitable for you. Rich creams often feel too heavy on oily or acne-prone skin, while strong exfoliants irritate dry or sensitive skin. This does not always mean the products are bad.

They might simply be wrong for your skin. Learn what your skin needs before buying a product because hormones, medication, age and weather also affect how it behaves. Consult a dermatologist if you are unsure about your skin type or have persistent concerns.

Build a simple skincare routine

A good skincare routine does not need 10 products. Start with the essentials and introduce new products one at a time. This makes it easier to notice what helps your skin and identify any product that causes irritation.

Cleanser

Use a gentle cleanser to remove sweat, oil, makeup and dirt. Avoid scrubbing harshly or washing your face too often because this weakens the skin barrier and causes dryness or irritation.

Toner

Toner is optional. If you choose to use one, select a hydrating or soothing formula that suits your skin. Avoid harsh products with high alcohol content if they leave your face dry, tight or irritated.

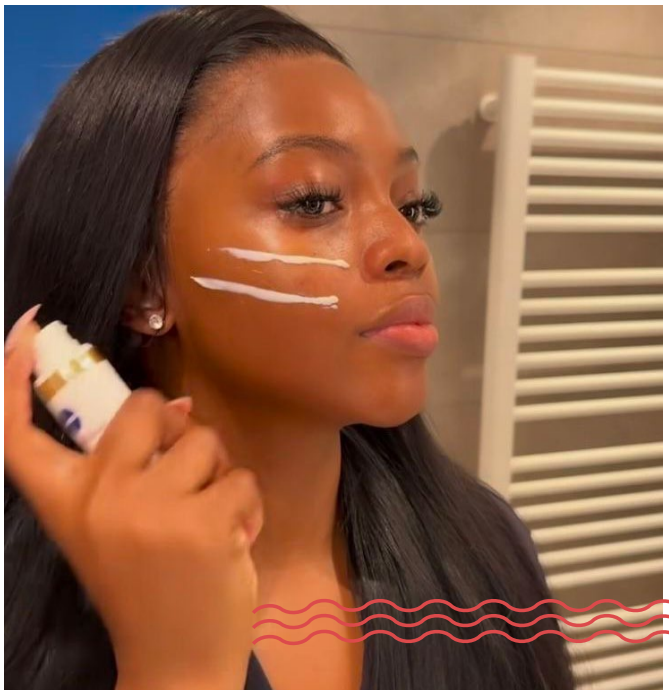
Serum or treatment

Serums usually target concerns such as acne, dehydration, uneven skin tone or fine lines. Avoid combining several active ingredients without understanding how they interact. Using too many treatments at once often irritates the skin instead of improving it.



Moisturiser

Every skin type needs moisture, including oily skin. Choose a lightweight, non-comedogenic moisturiser if you have oily or acne-prone skin. A thicker cream usually works better for dry skin.



Sunscreen

Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen during the day. Sun exposure worsens dark marks, damages the skin and speeds up visible signs of ageing. Reapply it as directed, especially when spending long periods outdoors or sweating heavily.

When a product appears ineffective, do not rush to replace it. Check whether you are using it correctly and consistently. Healthy skin rarely comes from one miracle product. It takes a simple routine, sensible choices and patience.

Rock your *long skirts*

by Ese Oghenetega

Long skirts are timeless fashion pieces enjoying a glamorous comeback, and Nigerians have been embracing them with style. Unlike in the past, when long skirts were worn mainly by the older generation or reserved for religious gatherings, Gen Z and Gen Alpha now wear long skirts and give them a luxe look. If you want to slay in a long skirt, check out five ways to stand out.

Your top matters

The beauty of long skirts is determined by the style of top you wear. You have various options - from sleeveless tops, crop tops, sophisticated blouses, and simple off-shoulder tops, among others. To look luxurious in it, let your long skirts come in stylish patterns to complement your gorgeous blouse.

Adopt monochrome style

If you desire to look simple yet sophisticated, rock your long skirts in the same colour as your top. You can choose any beautiful colour - from purple, brown, or blue- and combine it with some classy jewellery and a magnificent handbag.

Keep it fitted

You can only achieve a luxe look if your long skirt fits perfectly on your waist. If you wish, you can get a statement belt to do the work for you. How you look in the skirt will reflect your personality.

Choose a classy heel

Your heels have a role to play in how you look in your long skirt. The right heel will do the talking, elevate your look, and allow you to give fashionistas a run for their money.

Take note of your accessories

Being stylish goes beyond the clothes you wear. Your accessories play a major role in giving you a luxurious look with your long skirt. Make sure your jewellery adds some vibe to your look and delivers some top-notch sophistication. From your necklace to your earrings, to your sunglasses, fascinator or any other additions you wish to rock with your long skirt, keep them coordinated and well blended. Beyond what you wear, how you wear them also matters.






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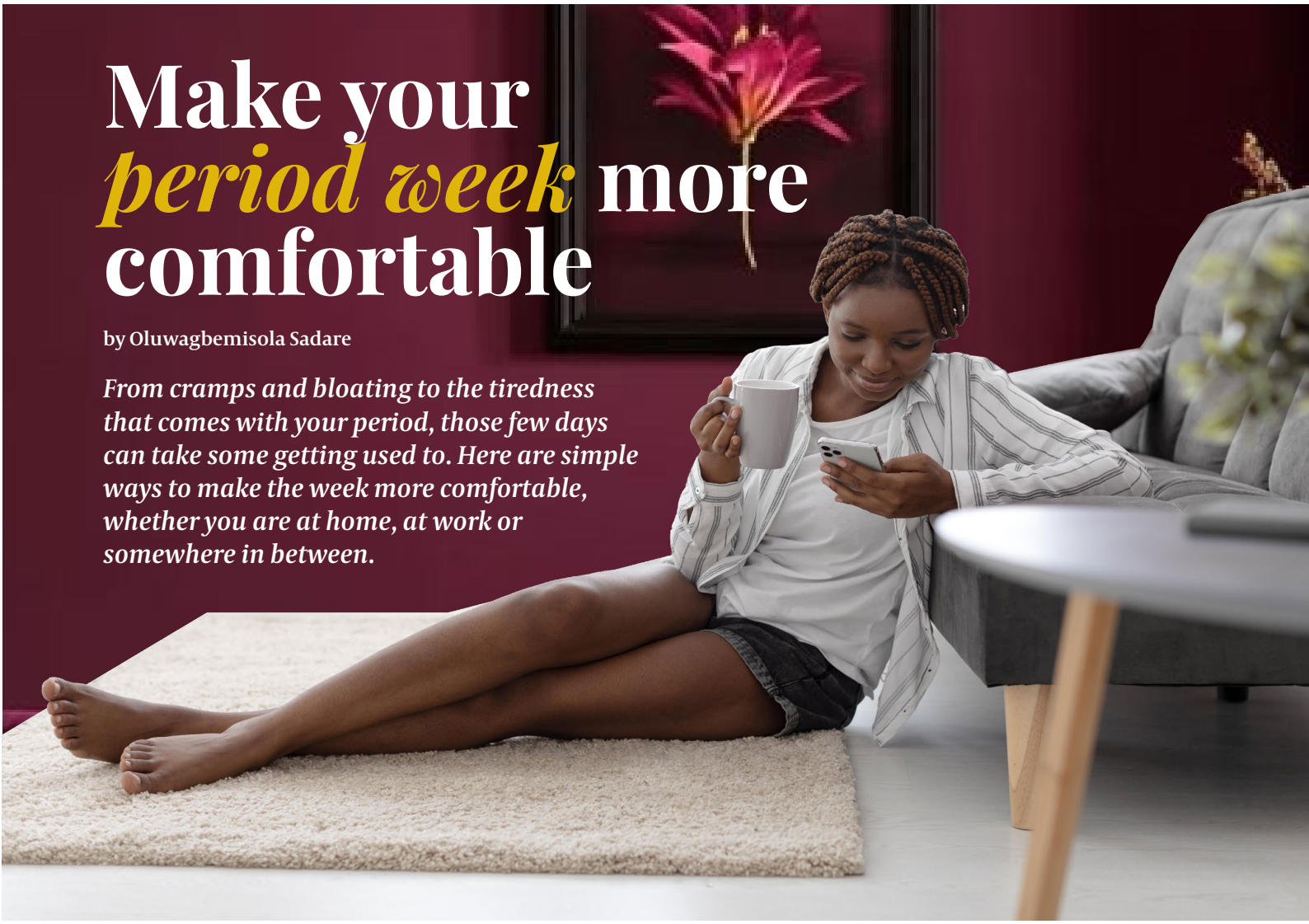




Make your *period week* more comfortable

by Oluwagbemisola Sadare

From cramps and bloating to the tiredness that comes with your period, those few days can take some getting used to. Here are simple ways to make the week more comfortable, whether you are at home, at work or somewhere in between.



There are days when your period makes you want to cancel everything.

The alarm rings, you have somewhere to be, and your stomach is already cramping. You still have to get dressed, find your way through traffic, sit through meetings, answer messages and carry on as though your uterus did not just announce that it has other plans.

Not everyone has a difficult period. Some women barely notice theirs, while others deal with cramps, backache, headaches, bloating, tiredness or mood changes.

Whatever your usual experience, there is no prize for making the week harder than it has to be. A few practical changes can help you get through it with less fuss.

Bring out the hot-water bottle

A hot-water bottle or heating pad placed against the lower abdomen can help ease menstrual cramps. A warm bath or shower can also provide some relief, particularly when the ache has travelled into your back. Heat is one of the simple home measures recommended for period pain. Keep the hot-water bottle close on those first few days if that is when your cramps usually appear. At night, a warm shower before bed may also help you settle down.



Take a walk

When your stomach hurts, exercise may sound like the last thing you should be doing. You do not have to put on trainers and complete a serious workout. A walk around the neighbourhood, a few stretches in your room or some gentle yoga can be enough to get you moving. Physical activity has been associated with relief from menstrual cramps.

Of course, some days you need to lie down. The point is not to push yourself through pain. It is simply not to assume that you must stay completely still because your period has started.

Do not forget to eat

There is a difference between wanting chocolate and deciding that chocolate will be your lunch.

When you are tired or dealing with cramps, meals can become an afterthought. You grab a biscuit in the morning, drink something at work, and suddenly realise it is 4 pm and you have barely eaten.



Try to keep proper meals on the menu

Beans, eggs, fish, meat and dark green vegetables are among the foods that provide iron. This matters particularly for women who have heavy periods, since losing a lot of blood over time can contribute to iron deficiency

anemia.
You do not need to buy a cupboard full of 'period foods'. Eat the food you normally eat, and make sure it is enough.

Pack your emergency supplies

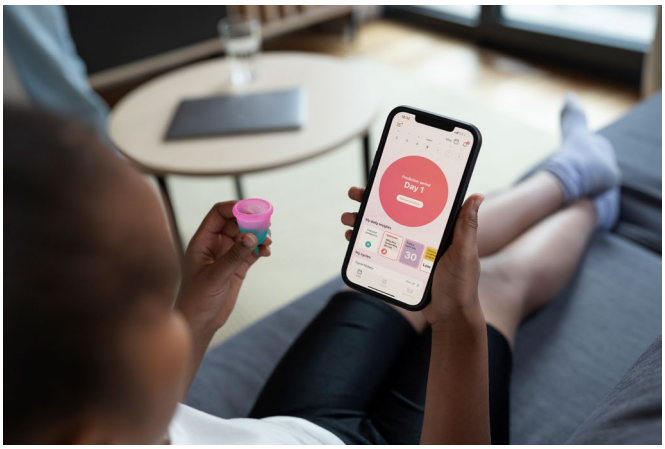
Every woman who has had her period unexpectedly knows the importance of having a spare pad nearby.
Keep a few in your handbag, office drawer or wherever you spend most of your day. Add tissues, wipes, a spare pair of underwear and a small bag for disposal if you have the room.
Good menstrual hygiene is important, too. Wash your hands before and after changing menstrual products, and follow the instructions for reusable products.



Make room for rest

If you already know that the first day of your period leaves you exhausted, there is no reason to pretend otherwise.
You may not be able to take the day off work, but you can make a few adjustments. Cook dinner earlier if you can. Pick comfortable clothes. Avoid packing your evening with unnecessary errands. If you usually spend an hour scrolling on your phone at night, try going to bed instead.

The same applies to social plans. You do not have to disappear for a week, but you also do not have to say yes to everything. Sometimes taking care of yourself means going home.



Keep track of period changes

Your period can change over time, so it helps to know what is usual for your own body.
A simple calendar or period-tracking app can help you remember when your period usually arrives and notice changes in bleeding, pain or other symptoms.

This becomes particularly useful when something feels different from your usual pattern.
Period pain is common, but pain that regularly prevents you from working, sleeping or carrying out normal activities deserves attention. Severe or worsening pain can sometimes be linked to conditions such as endometriosis, adenomyosis or fibroids.

The same goes for unusually heavy bleeding, bleeding between periods, pain during sex or pain when urinating or passing stool. If these symptoms keep happening, speak to a doctor rather than simply deciding that you have to live with them.



A few things to keep handy

A hot-water bottle: For the days when cramps arrive with little warning.

Extra pads: Keep some at home, at work and in your handbag.

Water: Especially useful when you are out for hours.

Something filling to eat: Do not rely on biscuits and coffee until dinner.

Comfortable clothes: Your period is not the week to suffer for a pair of jeans.

A little extra time: If mornings are difficult, give yourself some breathing room.

A note of your symptoms: It can help you recognise changes from one month to the next.

Periods are part of life, but discomfort does not have to become normal. Once you know what tends to bother you most, preparing for it can make those few days much less disruptive.

Guardian Woman
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DOLLY OHANYERE:

Know yourself before the world defines you

by Ijeoma Thomas-Odia

Dolly Ohanyere is a Lawyer, certified Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) Practitioner, Leadership Coach, and Relationship and Marriage Counsellor with a passion for helping individuals and couples build thriving relationships and realise their fullest potential. She is the Founder of Thrive360 Limited and The Healthy Marriage Hub, and the Author of The Becoming Collection - six books at the intersection of identity, purpose, relationships, healing, and daily living. With expertise spanning human capital development, emotional intelligence, behavioural change, and relational health, Dolly works with individuals, couples, and organisations across Nigeria and beyond - equipping them with the tools, frameworks, and mindset shifts that produce lasting transformation. In this interview she speaks on transforming families and societies especially women.

You often speak about identity, purpose and relationships. Why is it important for women to understand who they are before making major career or relationship decisions?

This is the core of my teaching. The framework that I use is: Start Right, Choose Right and Marry Right. God designed identity before purpose, purpose before partnership, and partnership as the completion, not the beginning, of the journey. Adam's identity was rooted in God and before He created Eve, He gave Adam work to do. He placed Adam in the garden with a specific mandate. Adam had an assignment, a calling, a specific and irreplaceable role in the world God had created, and that assignment was given, established and active before God said it was not good for man to be alone.

Identity, purpose and relationship are not three separate conversations; they are one conversation in the right order, and the order matters. If you don't start right, you can't choose right. If you don't choose right, you can't marry right. It is that simple. When a woman does not know who she is, she will define herself by whoever chooses her. When she does not know her purpose, she will adopt someone else's vision for her life and call it love or loyalty. I always say, you cannot choose well from a wound. You cannot choose a career that is truly aligned with you if you do not first know what you are aligned to. You cannot choose a partner who sees you if you have not yet done the work of seeing yourself.

Every major decision made without a rooted identity is a decision made from fear, performance or what feels familiar, not from what is actually true. For women specifically, we are socialised to define ourselves in relation to others daughter, wife, mother, employee and so on. The world gives us relational identities before we have had the chance to build an internal one. The work of returning to yourself to the original, to who you were before the world had its say is not selfish; it is foundational.

> *"What I wish women would learn earlier is that a boundary is not a wall; it is a definition."*
>
> — DOLLY OHANYERE

What led you to being an author?

I actually prefer to describe myself as a writer because I have been writing for years. I recently found a notebook I wrote in 2019 and discovered I had listed all the books I wanted to write up to 2035. I didn't even remember writing it. Earlier this year, during a counselling session, I mentioned that I write far more than I speak. I had written so much that had never been shared. I was encouraged to stop holding back, and that conversation became the turning point. Some of the manuscripts had been sitting in my email drafts for years. I even discovered unfinished books simply by searching for titles that came up during conversations. That experience reminded me that writing had always been part of my journey; I simply needed to complete the work.



Tell us about The Becoming Collection. How are the six books interconnected?

They all speak to one another because they all begin with identity. The first two books focus on purpose. It Was Always There explains that purpose is already inside us and needs to be uncovered, while Seen from the Start helps parents recognise and nurture purpose in their children. I made both books free because I don't want purpose discovery to become something people cannot access. The next two books are for singles. The Mirror encourages honest self-examination before choosing a life partner, while Meaningful Choosing provides a framework for making relationship decisions from wholeness rather than fear or loneliness. The final two books, Wells and Encounters and its devotional, focus on healing. Together, the six books tell one story. Identity is the foundation; from identity comes purpose, relationships and healing.

Many women reach a point where they feel stuck in their careers. How can a woman recognise when it is time to change direction or reinvent herself?

The feeling of being stuck is not a problem to be solved; it is information to be read. The first thing I tell any woman who comes to me at that crossroads is this: the discomfort you are feeling is not a sign that something is wrong with you. It is a sign that something in you has outgrown the container you are currently in. There are three signals I always look for. The first is what I call the Sunday evening feeling. When the thought of Monday morning produces dread rather than neutral anticipation consistently, not occasionally, that is not tiredness; that is misalignment. Your body is telling you that where you are spending the majority of your waking hours is no longer where you belong. The second is the absence of growth. When you have stopped being stretched, when you can do the job in your sleep, when nothing about it challenges or develops you anymore, you have not plateaued; you have finished. The question is not whether to move; the question is where. The third, and this is the one most women, often overlook, is the persistent pull towards something else. The idea you keep returning to. The work you do for free because it does not feel like work. The conversation that lights something up in you that your current role does not. That pull is not distraction; it is

Mercy Agbeti – Women Creating Wealth



> *"Don't be afraid to start small, and don't compare your journey with someone else's."*
>
> — MERCY AGBETI

After three successful editions, the Guardian Woman Festival is gearing up for its fourth edition, bringing together women leaders, policymakers, business executives, entrepreneurs, creatives, development practitioners, media professionals and other stakeholders committed to advancing opportunities for women and girls.

The 2027 edition, hosted by Federal Palace Resort, will hold under the theme "Women as Wealth Creators," spotlighting women's economic power, financial independence, entrepreneurship and their role in driving sustainable growth. In a buildup, Mercy Agbeti, a personal finance, investment coach, family-life practitioner and entrepreneur speaks on how she is creating wealth.

Career path

My career journey has taken me through different seasons and experiences. I studied Chemical Engineering at Ladoke Akintola University of Technology and later earned a Master's degree in Project Management Technology.

I started my entrepreneurial journey with Delight Couture, my fashion business, which I founded in 2011 and still run today. My interest in personal finance, entrepreneurship and helping women make better financial decisions also grew over the years. I began sharing what I was learning and eventually became known as the Christian Money Woman. Today, through Christian Money Woman and FinancHER, my work focuses on helping women understand money, build wealth and pursue financial independence while being intentional about their families and values. I want to see more women become wealth creators, not just income earners.

Women creating wealth

To me, women creating wealth means women moving from simply earning money to intentionally building wealth that gives them security, choices and the ability to create impact.

It is about understanding that your income is only the beginning. You have to learn how to manage your money, invest it, build assets and create businesses and opportunities that can grow beyond your active income.

This is also a big part of what I want to achieve through Women at the Wealthy Place. I want women to understand that wealth is not just about having money; it is about becoming financially knowledgeable, making wise decisions and building a financial foundation that can support the life you want to live.

For me, a woman creating wealth is a woman who understands money, knows how to create it, knows how to grow it and understands how to use it purposefully.

Sustainable wealth

For me, sustainable wealth is about making sure that my money is not just sitting somewhere, but that it is constantly being put to work. I have always been a very strong saver. In fact, I used to joke that I was a hoarder because saving came very naturally to me. But becoming a mother changed the way I looked at wealth.

When I became pregnant, I had savings, but I couldn't work because I was very sick. Suddenly, my income stopped, and I realised that I had saved money but didn't have enough investments generating income for me. That experience was a major turning point for me. It made me realise that saving is important, but you also have to learn how to invest and build assets.

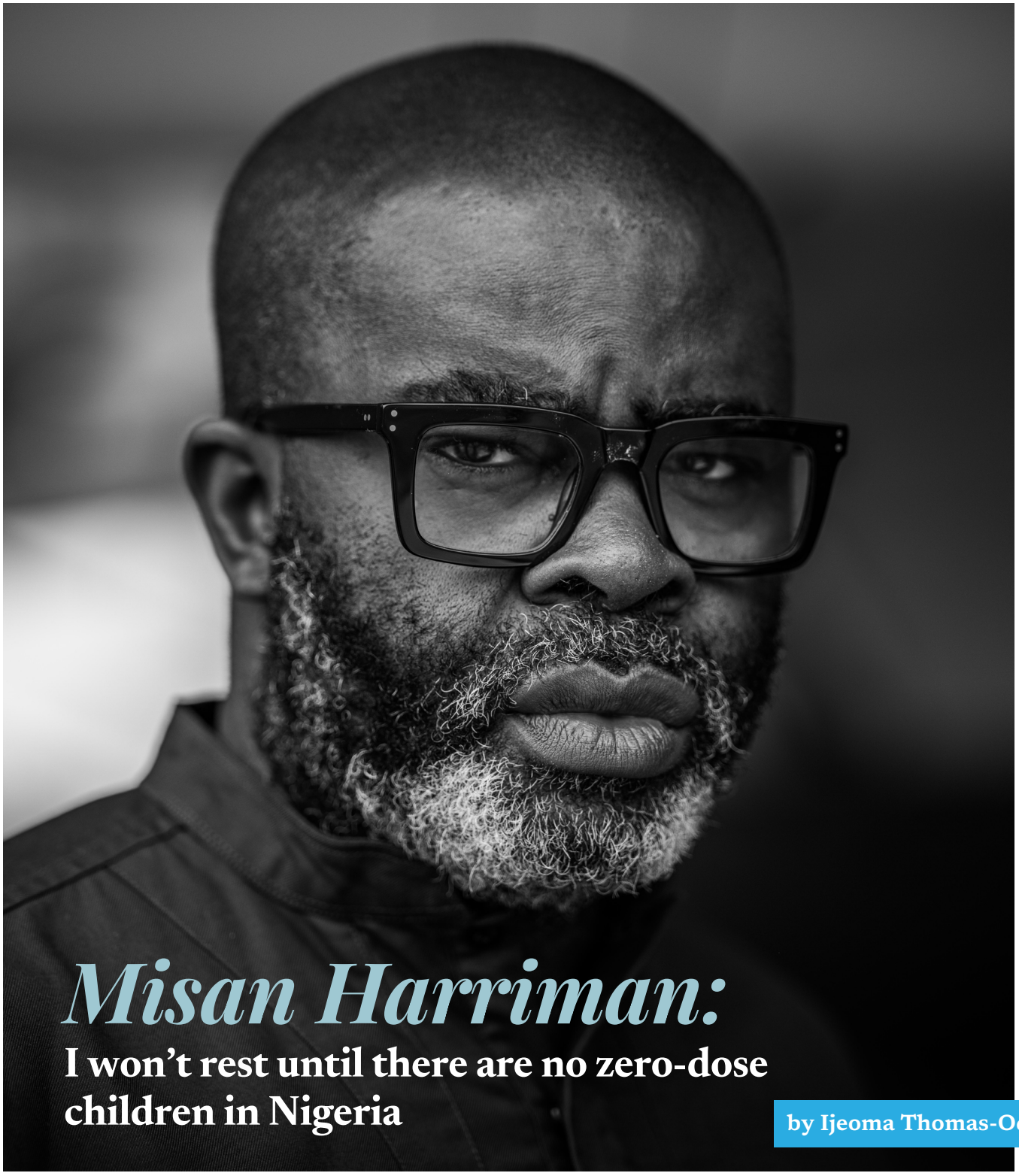
Since then, I have become much more intentional about investing. I invest in stocks, and I also think about property and land as part of long-term wealth creation. I have already started investing for my children as well.

For me, sustainable wealth is about putting your money to work, building assets and thinking beyond your immediate needs to the kind of financial foundation you want to create for yourself and the next generation.

Interested organisations can explore sponsorship, partnership and programme-hosting opportunities by contacting Guardianwomanfestival@guardian.ng, Ricketts: +234 802 301 5115 or Olayinka: +234 808 695 1129.

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Misan Harriman:

I won't rest until there are no zero-dose children in Nigeria

by Ijeoma Thomas-Odia

Nigerian-born photographer and filmmaker Misan Harriman has documented protests and major cultural moments around the world. A self-taught photographer, he became the first Black photographer to shoot the cover of British Vogue's September issue. He also chairs London's Southbank Centre and serves as a Save the Children ambassador. His work with the charity has taken him to communities affected by conflict, hunger and displacement, including Somalia, Somaliland and Egypt, where he has photographed children and drawn attention to their experiences.

Currently in Nigeria supporting Save the Children's efforts to reach children who have received no routine vaccinations, in this interview held at Federal Palace Resort, he discusses why immunisation became a cause he could not ignore, the barriers Nigerian families face, and why he believes Nigerians can mobilise their collective resources to protect vulnerable children.

You have been involved in social activism for several years. What drew you to Save the Children's work in Nigeria?

For me, as a Nigerian with a platform, it is important to use it for good not just outside Nigeria but in Nigeria. Over the last few years, I have had numerous projects with Save the Children in Nigeria. My team has just returned from Borno State, and my focus is on the work we are doing to make sure there are no zero-dose children in Nigeria. By zero-dose, I mean children who have received no vaccinations. That means their early life can potentially become a death sentence from diseases such as diphtheria, pneumonia and measles. All of these can be fatal, and there is no reason why they should be. So, I am trying to make sure these children can go to the nearest primary healthcare facility and receive free vaccines. Any mother or father with a child within the appropriate age range should be able to give that child the same chance my children have the chance to live a healthy life and grow well. That is the very least I can do as someone with a platform and as someone who was born in Nigeria. How can I not help the vulnerable?

> *"We need to help mothers know where their nearest primary healthcare facility is."*
>
> — MISAN HARRIMAN

Why did immunisation become such an important cause for you?

There are many things wrong with all countries, but when you know the medicine exists and that children will die without it, how can you sit there knowing that children can live and that the medicine exists? That is why I chose it. The solution to the problem already exists. It is about distribution and resources. When you see that and ignore it, you have to live with that. I couldn't live with myself knowing that I had the ability to do something about it.

From your recent interactions with families, what do you see as some of the biggest barriers to accessing healthcare?

There are a lot of cultural and economic issues. Some of the mothers I spoke to in Ikorodu, where I spent time recently, explained that sometimes their husbands do not want to spend money on transportation because the cost of living is so high. That money could become another meal for the whole family. People sometimes prioritise what seems immediately urgent without necessarily understanding that their child could become very sick without vaccination. Education is also important. We need to help mothers know where their nearest primary healthcare facility is. In some places, it is quite far, and even if you have transport, getting there can be difficult. One of the women who came had triplets. She came with her grandmother, and they walked. When you see that level of effort, you realise that these mothers want to protect their children. It is a natural instinct, so how can we not also help facilitate that and make it easier for them?

What can Nigerians do to support the work?

Save the Children Nigeria has channels through which people can donate directly to the projects we are doing. I would encourage people to support the work. You can go through Save the Children's platforms and donate directly to the Nigerian projects. Every contribution helps because it goes towards supporting these children.

You have described this as an ongoing project. What have you seen on the ground?

This is ongoing. I happen to be here now, but this is not a one-off project. I came to oversee the work and make sure everything had been implemented, and I was really blown away. About 90 per cent of the people I met were home-grown Nigerians. They know the area and understand the cultural nuances. It is amazing to see how effective the work can be when people understand the context. We are not asking for somebody to come and save us. We are doing our own work, saving our own children, and it is really important to understand the context of this work.

What are the biggest limitations?

Resources. There are 2.1 million zero-dose children, so that is a huge challenge. The more resources we have, the more children we can reach and save. It is as simple as that.

Vaccine hesitancy remains an issue in some communities. How do you approach those concerns?

We speak to people respectfully and provide information. We show them historically how medicine has changed lives. Before penicillin was invented, people were scared of it. Imagine a world without penicillin. Medicine works. It is as simple as that, especially when children are far more vulnerable. As an adult, if you want to make decisions about your own healthcare, that is your choice. But when a child gets measles, can you ignore medicine? You have to ask yourself: are you going to sit and pray and hope your child gets better, or are you going to give that child the medicine that could save his or her life? To me, that is an easy choice.

What has been the most rewarding part of this work for you?

I am just really proud of everyone I have seen working in humanitarian and primary healthcare services in Nigeria. They are dedicated men and women. They care about children.

We are dealing with children and, usually, mothers as well, and there are a lot of people dedicating their lives to this. Let's support them and recruit more people like them in every state in Nigeria. Let's expand the work. I won't rest until there are no zero-dose children in this country.

Do you see the government as an important partner in achieving that goal?

If the government wants to participate, that is fine. Save the Children is a global humanitarian organisation, and I am its global ambassador. I look at many projects around the world. I was recently in Somaliland and in Cairo, helping Palestinian children in Egypt. There are many projects I get involved in, but as a Nigerian, I take particular pride in the work we do in Nigeria. So, if the government wants to participate, I am sure we can work with them. But I am focused on fundraising from Nigerians, both in the country and in the diaspora. We can do this ourselves.

Having worked with children in different parts of the world, what has that experience taught you about Nigerians and our responsibility to one another?

I think Nigerians are very aware of how we can make a difference. Before we were colonised, all the tribes and villages knew how to look after their sick and protect their children. It is actually in our bones. Something happened after colonisation, where we became more individualistic capitalism, protecting my own family and that is all I care about. But something is beginning to change. We are going back to a better way of living. Think of all the money we spend on Detty December and what that means in Lagos. Imagine if some of that was spent on children who have a chance of living or dying. Tell me what you would rather be doing. I think people are beginning to grow in what they see as their value system. At the end of the day, we all die. From the people I have met in their final days, they never talk about how much they have. They talk about who they helped and what they did in this life. So, let's continue to move in that direction.

Your photography is another powerful part of your activism. What role does it play in telling these stories?

I photograph these stories, and I will be releasing some of the images soon. I have released work before, usually with magazines, newspapers or Save the Children. For me, photography is about truth. There is no small talk in black and white. If you look at history books and some of the most important photographs of all time, many of them are black and white for a reason. I love it. I was inspired by photographers I saw when I was a child, images of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and so many others. Those are the shoulders I stand on. Gordon Parks and his civil rights photography. Peter Magubane's photography during the apartheid movement in South Africa. Much of that work was in black and white. I guess my eyes see things in monochrome.

Your decision to remain committed to black-and-white photography has become part of your visual identity. What keeps you committed to it?

My work is not about being accepted, it is about truth. If you're a real artist, you don't care about acceptance. You care about truth. That is why I do what I do. I have no interest in who accepts me. I have every interest in making people see the truth of the human condition through my lens. That is possibly why so many people around the world have responded to my work. Whether it is the #EndSARS protests I photographed, work in Johannesburg and Minnesota with George Floyd's family, Black children, children with Down syndrome or my sister, people respond to the images. Sometimes people cry when they see my photographs. As a photographer, you have to search for truth. That is why I don't use Photoshop. I don't retouch. I don't use lighting or flash. I have my camera. That's it. I'm not a wedding photographer. I document the human condition. I have my camera, my eye and my heart. That's all I need.

What do you hope people see when they look at your photographs?

I think humans are still humans. We can be good and bad. We can be kind, and people are simply trying to figure out life. The mothers I met just a few days ago are just the same as you and me. They are trying to figure out life. If my images can humanise them and remind everyone that we are all the same that no one is better than anyone else then that is important to me.



Upcoming fashion shows

A particular kind of energy settles over Nigeria as the year winds down, a mix of harmattan dust, gridlocked traffic, and the unmistakable buzz of a country about to put on its best clothes. This year, that energy is set to stretch across three full months, as five major fashion events transform Abuja and Lagos into what might be West Africa's busiest runway calendar to date.

by Dorcas Ayoola

Nigeria Fashion Week's Green & Blue Economy Edition

Date: 2th - 4th October 2026
Location: key venue Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja

The season kicks off not with spectacle for spectacle's sake, but with a statement. Over three days, the event will pair runway presentations with talks and exhibitions built around sustainable design- think upcycled fabrics, ocean-conscious materials, and manufacturing practices designed to leave a lighter footprint. It's less a traditional fashion week and more a working showcase of where the industry could go if it took its own rhetoric seriously.





Lagos Fashion Week

Date: 28th October - 1st November 2026
Location: Federal Palace Hotel and Casino, located at 6-8 Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos

If there's one date circled in red on every stylist, buyer, and fashion editor's calendar, it's this one. Founded in 2011 by Omoyemi Akerele, Lagos Fashion Week has spent over a decade becoming West Africa's flagship fashion event, a platform that has launched careers, cemented reputations, and put Nigerian design firmly on the global map.
For five days, the city's fashion elite descend on the runway venue for a packed program, headline shows from established houses, discovery slots for emerging talent, the Fashion Business Series of industry talks and masterclasses, retail activations, and the kind of after-parties that generate their own headlines.
It's a week where a young designer's collection can catch the eye of an international buyer, and where Lagos's reputation as a genuine fashion capital, not just an African one, gets reaffirmed season after season. Industry professionals, buyers, and press typically get priority access to the business programming, but the public isn't shut out; ticketed runway shows and open exhibitions mean anyone with an appetite for spectacle can get a seat.

GTCO Fashion Weekend

Date: 7th - 8th November 2026
Location: Plot 1, Water Corporation Drive, Oniru, Victoria Island, Lagos

Where Lagos Fashion Week trades in industry gravitas, GTCO Fashion Weekend has carved out its own lane as the people's fashion event, part runway, part festival and all vibes. It is backed by Guaranty Trust Holding Company; it historically blends catwalk shows with pop-up retail, live music, food, and family-friendly programming, making it one of the more accessible entries on the calendar for anyone who wants to experience Lagos fashion culture without needing an industry badge.





Fashion Rave

Date: 27 November 2026
Location: Muri Okunola Park in Victoria Island, Lagos

Fashion Rave has built its identity around emerging and independent designers who might not yet have the pedigree for the bigger stages but often have the sharpest ideas. There's a social-media-native, streetwear-adjacent energy to the whole affair, and it tends to draw a crowd that's as interested in what's happening off the runway as on it.

It's the kind of event where trends get tested before they hit the mainstream, and where discovering "the next big name" feels genuinely possible. Open to the public, it leans hard into contemporary and streetwear design communities looking for a platform that speaks their language.

Africa Fashion Week Nigeria (AFWN)

Date: 12th - 13th December 2026
Location: J. Randle Centre for Yoruba Culture and History in Lagos

Closing out the year and, fittingly, the calendar, is Africa Fashion Week Nigeria, an event that widens the lens from Nigerian fashion to African fashion at large. As part of the broader Africa Fashion Week International network, AFWN has positioned itself as a bridge, bringing designers from across the continent onto one stage and pushing for the kind of cross-border business connections that turn local talent into global brands.



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marie claire NIGERIA

BEAUTY



My Beauty Hack — Bloody Civilian shares her secrets to making makeup more fun on dark skin

by Chinazam Ikechi-Uko

Bloody Civilian sits in the passenger's side of a car in Lagos traffic, the air conditioner blasting, and she is about to do her makeup. "Do my makeup with me in Lagos traffic," she says, and just like that, we are in. What follows is a very Bloody Civilian approach to beauty — funny, honest, a little chaotic and full of opinions.

For her first #MyBeautyHack, the singer takes us through the routine she has built for herself, starting with Danessa Myricks' Blurring Balm and e.l.f.'s Power Grip Primer before moving on to colour correction, foundation, concealer, brows, eyeshadow, lips and, of course, plenty of mascara. She has a surprisingly flexible approach to her products. An eyeshadow palette becomes part of her base routine, a Charlotte Tilbury lip liner doubles as eyeliner, and her favourite foundation is used sparingly. Her "one-drop" rule is simple: she would rather build her makeup slowly than pile it on.

But the routine is also a window into how Bloody Civilian thinks about beauty. As a dark-skinned woman who loves makeup, she talks openly about how difficult it can be to find references that actually speak to darker skin and different facial features. She recalls her early makeup experiments and the frustration of following techniques that simply did not work for her. Contouring, for example, never quite made sense for her round face.

Hyperpigmentation also becomes part of the conversation. Bloody shares that hers is connected to PMOS, but there is no attempt to turn it into something she needs to hide. Instead, she shows us how she works with her skin, using colour correction and a combination of products to even things out while still letting her face look like her face.

By the time she gets to her glossy Fenty-lined lips and her three-layer mascara routine, the makeup is almost secondary to the conversation. This is Bloody Civilian figuring out what makes her feel good, keeping the things that work and leaving the rest behind. And, naturally, she manages to make doing your makeup in Lagos traffic look like a good time.

Watch the full video on YouTube @MarieClaireNG

marie claire NIGERIA

HEALTH



"I thought my period was just irregular" — My journey to discovering I had PMOS and learning to live with my body

by Titilayo Oladapo-Ariyo

I got my first period at 13, nearly 14, later than most of my classmates. While puberty felt like a quiet competition, with other girls showing off their bras and comparing bodies, I was more concerned with getting my period. I saw menstruation as my passport into womanhood and, with two packets of pads waiting at home, I was eagerly anticipating the day it would finally come.

The week I noticed brown discharge, I knew my time had come. And the day my period finally started, I ran outside to call my best friend, who laughed and joked that I was finally a big girl. If you rode a horse inside me that week, you would have ridden with stealth.

But that was before my period started playing Hide-and-Seek with me. It was a game I quickly grew tired of, even as a child. I never liked waiting games; I never understood the point of hiding in dingy, uncomfortable places just so you would not be caught. I always wanted to be found quickly, so we could move on to other interesting games, maybe Ten Ten or Who is in the Garden? So why was my period hiding from me?

When my period became a waiting game

The first time I did not see my period for two months, I was worried, but Google and my friends told me not to panic. According to them, irregularity is common in the first years of menstruation. I began to wait for my period to come, and when it eventually did, it came with searing pain. It was deathlike pain, clenching and crushing my insides, holding my breath to ransom. It was heat inside of me, cold sweats all over me. I would lie face down on the sitting room floor, calling all the names of God and wondering why he did not answer any.

Much more than the cramps was the flow. Most girls said theirs lasted three days; mine lasted longer. Year in, year out, my period would disappear and then appear heavily. So heavy that I used 5 pads a day and could still be soaked at any time. Heavy that I wrapped toilet paper over my pads for reinforcement. I even started using paper tape to join two pads, one at the top of my panties, one at the bottom.

When my body stopped making sense

But nothing prepared me for 2020. It was the year my period began and stayed for months. That was the year I could no longer afford pads and switched to cut-out clothes. That was when I washed blood so much that I started to smell of it.

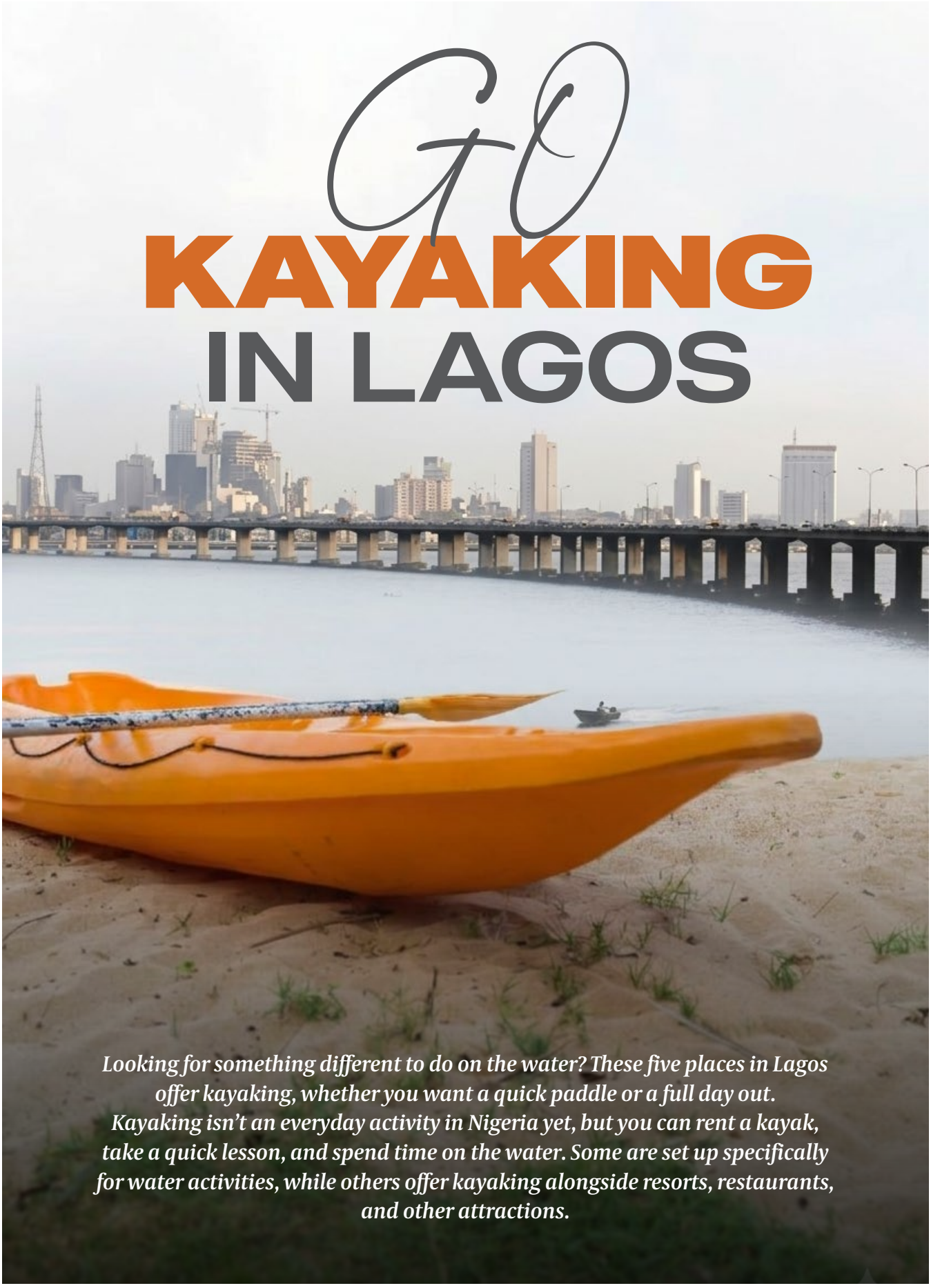
Blood has a scent. It lingers. It follows you into rooms even when no one else can perceive it.

That was also the year I bruised my leg one afternoon while running down the stairs to greet my cousin, and no blood surfaced, and she, a 4th-year medical student, looked at my palms and eyelids, and calmly told me that I was anaemic, then dragged me to University College Hospital, Ibadan, and secured a doctor's appointment for me.

I remember the morning of that appointment with painful clarity. My consultation was at 10 a.m., but patient cards were issued at 8 a.m., so I woke early. I bathed, and I wore a fresh pad. I was refilling the bathroom bucket with water for my mother when I felt the unmistakable rush of blood. Within minutes, the pad I had just worn was soaked, and blood trickled down my thighs.

Exhaustion is the word people don't emphasise enough. When you have been unwell for months, the dominant feeling is not fear. It is not anger. It is not even pain, but exhaustion. A bone-deep weariness. I did not notice when the tears began or when my mother walked into the passageway. But I heard clearly when she asked if I had aborted a pregnancy because she had never seen anything like that before. Neither had I.

Visit www.marieclaire.ng to read more



GO KAYAKING IN LAGOS

Looking for something different to do on the water? These five places in Lagos offer kayaking, whether you want a quick paddle or a full day out. Kayaking isn't an everyday activity in Nigeria yet, but you can rent a kayak, take a quick lesson, and spend time on the water. Some are set up specifically for water activities, while others offer kayaking alongside resorts, restaurants, and other attractions.

1

Kampari Tours, Lekki



Location: 7 Wole Olateju Crescent, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos
Water body: Lagos Lagoon
Price: From ₦6,000 per person

Kampari Tours has kayaking among its outdoor experiences, with the Lagos Lagoon providing the setting from its Lekki base.
The company has five tandem kayaks and two inflatables, and organises group kayaking sessions on the second and fourth weekends of the month. First-timers can also get an introduction before heading onto the water.
It is a fairly easy introduction to kayaking, particularly if you are going with friends. You do not need to turn it into a full weekend away.

2

Kayaking In Lagos, Victoria Island

Location: Foreshore Road, Victoria Island, Lagos
Water body: Lagos Lagoon
Price: Confirm before booking

Kayak In Lagos is a dedicated canoe and kayak rental service on Foreshore Road, Victoria Island.
The operator's location makes it convenient for people around Victoria Island and its surrounding neighbourhoods who want to get out on the lagoon without travelling towards the resorts in Ibeju-Lekki.
For first-timers, it is worth contacting the operator before heading out to confirm availability and what is included in the session.



3 La Campagne Tropicana, Ibeju-Lekki



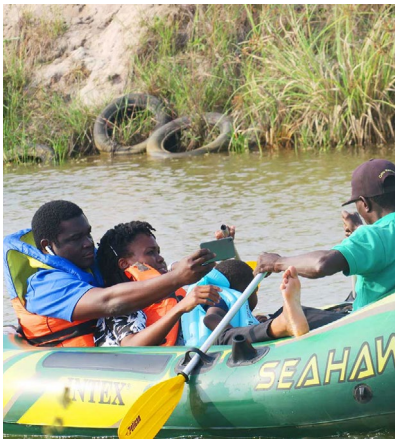
Location: Ikegun, Ibeju-Lekki, Lagos
Water body: La Campagne Lagoon
Price: Confirm before visiting

At La Campagne Tropicana, kayaking is part of a much bigger day out.
The resort sits between the Atlantic Ocean and its lagoon, with kayaking among its water activities.
Visitors can also take part in canoeing, boat cruises and other activities around the resort.
There is even a fishing-with-kayak experience for those who want to spend longer on the water.
The advantage of coming here is that kayaking does not have to be the entire plan. You can spend some time around the lagoon, have lunch, explore the resort, and make a day of the journey.

4 *Omu Resort, Ibeju-Lekki*

Location: Bogije Town, almost opposite Lakowe Lakes Golf Course, Ibeju-Lekki
Water body: Omu Creek
Price: ₦4,000 per person

Omu Resort is the option for people who want to combine kayaking with a full day of activities.
Kayaking takes place around the resort's waterfront, while the rest of the property has plenty to keep visitors occupied.
There is a zoo, water park, amusement rides, and horse riding, among other attractions.
It works particularly well for groups where not everyone wants to spend the day on the water. You can paddle for a while and then move on to something completely different without having to leave the resort.



5 *Laygos Watercrafts, Victoria Island*



Location: The Wings Complex, Ozumba Mbadiwe Street, Victoria Island, Lagos
Water body: Lagos waterfront
Price: From ₦10,750 per session
Laygos Watercrafts offers a more guided approach to kayaking.
A guide leads participants along a sheltered shoreline and provides technique coaching, making the experience suitable for people who have never handled a kayak before. Life jackets and a safety briefing are also provided.
The operator runs group kayaking events as well, so you can join an organised outing rather than arrange a private session.
For a first attempt, the guided format can make things easier. You arrive, get your briefing, pick up a paddle, and follow the guide onto the water.

Explore Kano's distinct dishes

by Oluwagbemisola Sadare



In Kano, food is part of everyday life. From waina eaten hot in the morning to bowls of tuwo and soup, the city's traditional dishes offer a taste of its Hausa culture and daily life.

Kano has its old city walls, busy markets, mosques and crowded streets. But food is also a big part of life in the city.

Much of Kano's cooking is based on ingredients that have long been used in Northern Nigeria. Rice, millet, maize, beans, groundnuts, meat and baobab leaves are used in different dishes, many of which are still prepared at home and sold by local food vendors.

The National Institute for Cultural Orientation lists more than 20 foods associated with Kano, *including tuwo dawa, tuwon masara, tuwo shinkafa, wainar shinkafa, danwake, gurasa, funkaso, miyan kuka and miyan taushe.*

For anyone visiting Kano, these dishes are a good place to start.



Waina

Also known as *wainar shinkafa,* the little rice cakes are made from fermented batter and cooked in a round, dimpled pan. The finished cakes are soft inside, with lightly browned edges. They are usually served with pepper, yaji or a sauce.

In **Yan Awaki,** in the old city, masa sellers prepare them in the morning, often cooking them as customers wait.

Eat ***waina*** straight from the pan if you can. It is warm, soft and slightly tangy from the fermentation. Add some pepper and you have a simple breakfast.



Tuwo and soup

There is more than one kind. ***Tuwo shinkafa*** is made from rice, while ***tuwo dawa*** and ***tuwo masara*** are prepared from grains such as guinea corn and maize. The smooth, firm mound of ***tuwo*** comes with soup, usually in generous portions.

Miyan kuka, prepared with powdered baobab leaves, is one of the soups commonly eaten with tuwo. Miyan taushe is made with pumpkin and groundnuts and has a richer, nuttier taste. Break off a piece of tuwo with your fingers, use it to scoop up the soup and continue.

For anyone used to eating rice, yam or swallow with soup, the combination is familiar enough, even though the flavours are different.



Danwake

The small dumplings are made from cereal and bean flours, cooked and served with pepper, oil and other seasonings. Groundnut oil and kuli-kuli may also be added.

It is inexpensive, filling and commonly eaten as a casual meal.
Find a food seller, order a plate and watch it being put together. The amount of pepper can be adjusted, but it is part of the dish.



Gurasa, Kano's bread

The flatbread is made from fermented dough and traditionally cooked in a clay oven. It is soft, slightly chewy and can be eaten with soup, meat, groundnuts or other accompaniments.

Gurasa has been part of Kano's food culture for generations. Its history is also linked to people who came to the city from other parts of the Islamic world and brought food traditions with them.

In Kano, ***Jakara Yan Gurasa*** is associated with the making and selling of the bread.
Eat it warm if you can. Fresh from the oven, it is softer and more enjoyable.



Fura da nono

Fura are small balls made from pounded millet. They are mixed into nono, fermented cow's milk, producing a thick drink with a slightly sour taste.

The mixture is often served from calabashes by roadside sellers and market vendors. ***Kofar Wambai*** is one of the places where it can be found.

Fura da nono is more filling than it looks. A serving can carry you through the afternoon, particularly on a hot day.



Kilishi

No food trip through Kano is complete without kilishi. The meat is sliced thinly, seasoned and dried before being coated with a spicy mixture. The finished product is firm, dry and full of flavour.

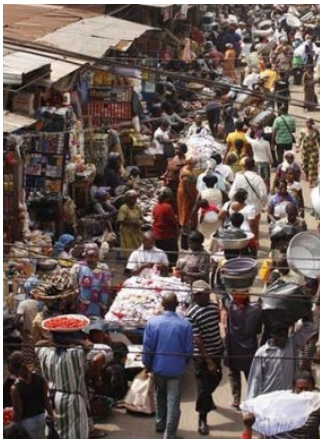
Kilishi is sometimes compared with suya, but the two are prepared differently. Suya is grilled and eaten hot, while kilishi is dried and made to keep. That makes it easy to take home. Buy some for the journey, although there is a good chance the packet will be opened before you get there.



Funkaso

The fried, pancake-like food is made from flour and can be eaten with soup or other accompaniments. It is one of the traditional dishes recorded as part of Kano's food culture.

It is also a reminder that Northern Nigerian food is not just tuwo, meat and spices. There are many everyday dishes that remain more familiar to residents than to visitors.



Where to find these foods

Kurmi Market, Kofar Mata, Kofar Wambai and Kofar Ruwa are among the places to explore if you want to see more of everyday Kano. The old city also has food sellers and small eating places where traditional dishes are still part of the daily menu.

There is no complicated plan needed. Ask what is fresh, see what people around you are eating and try something you have not had before.

In Kano, food is part of the experience of the city. Sometimes, sitting down to eat is as useful as walking through its streets when you want to understand a place.

SPOT REVIEW



Inside Federal Palace fitness centre

by Chidinma Enweani

Discover how the Federal Palace fitness centre and Pool Club in Victoria Island blends upscale comfort, state-of-the-art equipment, and scenic outdoor recreation for the ultimate holistic wellness experience.

When it comes to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, finding a place that blends fitness with upscale comfort is everything.

Far from a cramped basement workout room, this fitness space pairs state-of-the-art equipment with an atmosphere that instantly motivates you to crush your wellness goals. The clean, air-conditioned environment and scenic views overlooking the lush grounds and pool area make every treadmill session feel like a breath of fresh air.

Whether you are looking to squeeze in an early morning cardio routine or unwind with a relaxing post-workout stretch, the space balances high-energy productivity with ultimate relaxation.

What makes this fitness experience truly complete is its outdoor recreational ecosystem designed to support your active lifestyle. Operating in tandem with the indoor gym, the Pool Club extends your wellness routine right into the open air.

It features a scenic outdoor jogging track that winds through peaceful greenery, allowing runners to log miles against a backdrop of fresh coastal breeze and luxury surroundings.

For those who love cross-training and outdoor conditioning, the facility also supports an outdoor exercise circuit and professional tennis courts.

After pushing through a rigorous workout session inside the gym, members and guests can transition straight outdoors to take a refreshing dip in the sprawling swimming pool or relax by the water deck.

It creates a holistic wellness environment where physical training, outdoor sports, and total relaxation live under one roof. Don't worry, the gym is fully equipped with modern cardio machines, free weights, and resistance training gear catering to both beginners and seasoned athletes, complemented by outdoor tennis courts and a fitness circuit.

NEED TO KNOW

Location: 6-8 Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos.

Opening Hours: Open Daily.

Dress Code: Proper athletic attire is required inside the gym. For the tennis courts and surrounding outdoor areas, appropriate sportswear and comfortable athletic shoes are expected.

Reservations & Access: Because it's a luxury hospitality destination, bookings for any session is strongly recommended.

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Wellness & Style Live Experience 2026:

Experts urge Nigerians to rethink culture of burnout

by Ijeoma Thomas-Odia





Experts and business leaders have urged Nigerians to rethink the culture of constant hustle and exhaustion, advocating a more intentional approach to work, success and personal wellbeing.

The call was made at the sixth edition of the Wellness & Style Live Experience, organised by Exquisite Magazine and held at the Oriental Hotel, Lagos, with the theme, "Rest Is a Skill, Not a Reward – How to Live Well Without Burning Out."

The one-day lifestyle and wellness experience brought together women, entrepreneurs, professionals and wellness enthusiasts for conversations and practical activities around stress management, self-care, mindfulness and sustainable living.

Rather than adopting a conventional conference format, the event combined expert sessions with meditation, breathing exercises, mindful eating, journaling, tea tasting, games, massages and other interactive activities designed to encourage participants to practise the wellness principles being discussed.

Opening the event, Founder of Exquisite Magazine, ELOY Awards Foundation and Mindset Stylist, Dr. Tewa Onasanya, shared her personal experience with the consequences of prolonged stress and overwork.

Onasanya recalled that in 2009, while working excessively and neglecting adequate sleep and nutrition, she passed out and had to be revived. She later experienced stress-induced prediabetes in 2018; an experience she said prompted her to become more intentional about her health and wellbeing.

Today, she incorporates swimming, healthy eating, mindfulness, journaling, visualisation and affirmations into her lifestyle while seeking to create a healthier integration between her professional and personal life.

"Your next level requires a well-rested you," she told participants, while introducing her VASE framework - Visualisation, Affirmation, Scripting, Embodiment and Excited Energy - as a practical approach to becoming intentional about both the life one wants to create and how one wants to experience it.

The cost of pursuing success was also examined during a special address by Executive Director, Fidelity Bank Plc, Pamela Shodipo, titled "The Cost of Success: Leading Yourself Without Losing Yourself."

The session focused on the pressures associated with professional and personal achievement and the importance of maintaining one's health, identity and sense of self while pursuing ambitious goals.

The conversation continued during a panel titled "Burnout Is Not a Badge of Honour," featuring Executive Director, Optiva Capital Partners, Dr. Amaka Diane Okeke; and Deputy General Manager and Regional Bank Head, Fidelity Bank, Chetachi Okechukwu. The session was moderated by Mental Health Responder, Dr. Kemi Dosunmu,.

The panel explored experiences of burnout, warning signs that are often overlooked and practical ways individuals can manage pressure and protect their wellbeing.

Speakers challenged the perception that being constantly busy or exhausted is necessarily an indication of ambition or success, stressing instead the importance of creating healthier boundaries and sustainable approaches to work and achievement.

The programme also expanded the conversation to other aspects of everyday wellbeing.

CEO, Vianda, Dr. Morenike George-Taylor, delivered a special address titled "The Art of Dining Well: Why Eating Out Is a Form of Selfcare," examining the relationship between food, enjoyment and personal wellbeing.

A guided reset session led by Wellness Coach, The Art of Living Happiness Center, Priyanka Bagaria, incorporated breathing and play, while Onasanya led participants through an affirmation meditation and letter-to-self exercise.

Participants also engaged in mindful eating, tea tasting, journaling and games, alongside relaxation experiences and massages. A "Drop Your Stress" dance session provided another opportunity for participants to unwind and release tension.

The event was anchored around three central ideas - Reset, Recharge and Redefine: resetting the mind and releasing overwhelm, recharging the body and spirit, and redefining what success and living well mean.

Aṣọ Òkè blazers

...a versatility guide

by Dorcas Ayoola

Some people assume Aso Oke blazers are hard to style, or are not sure where they even belong in a modern wardrobe. Fashion says otherwise. From brunch to black-tie, here are seven ways to wear this iconic Nigerian textile, proof that heritage and versatility can absolutely coexist.

Aso Oke patchwork blazer with zipper

Colourful woven panels meet a modern zipper closure for a jacket that feels both traditional and street-ready. Pair it with wide-leg trousers, jeans, a fitted top, or a simple skirt, then finish with sneakers, sandals, or heels depending on the mood.

You can wear it to brunches, creative workspaces, or fashion events, anywhere you want to feel playful and fashion-forward. It's the kind of statement jacket that elevates basics instantly.





Cropped Aso Oke blazer

This is a shorter, youthful cut that keeps the woven fabric front and centre. It can be styled with high-waisted trousers, a midi skirt, jeans, or a fitted camisole for dinner dates, birthdays, or casual gatherings.

Dress it up or down depending on the hour; this piece lets you wear tradition without committing to a full traditional look.

Aso Oke blazer dress

This is structured tailoring meets dress-like elegance.

Decorative buttons and intricate fabric detailing make this a striking alternative to the standard cocktail dress. You can add heels, a clutch, and minimal jewellery for weddings, formal dinners, or fashion shows, occasions that call for glamour and polish.



Longline Aso Oke blazer

An extended silhouette with bold stripes and statement sleeves brings drama without formality.

Layer it over a simple dress, fitted trousers, jeans, or a skirt, and complete it with heels or sandals. It works for work meetings, lunch dates, or evening outings- a piece that makes any simple outfit sophisticated.





Aso Oke blazer and wide-leg trouser set

A coordinated, tailored option for anyone who loves a put-together look. The structured blazer balances beautifully against flowing trousers paired with a fitted top or camisole and a structured bag.

Ideal for business meetings, weddings, and corporate events, it's a stylish alternative to the conventional suit.

Sleeveless Aso Oke blazer

This is also known as a woven waistcoat; this sleeveless take offers a clean silhouette that lets the fabric take centre stage.

You can wear it over a blouse, shirt, dress, or trousers for office settings, brunches, or cultural events. It's especially good for warm weather, when you want structure without the extra layer.





Ankara and Aso Oke blazer

The two of Nigeria's most iconic fabrics, combined: Ankara's bold prints against Aso Oke's woven texture. It can be styled with matching trousers, a simple top, and statement accessories for weddings, traditional ceremonies, or festive celebrations.

This combination is pure cultural pride, worn with modern confidence.

Photos by Dflerock, Estaz, L'Atelier Sephora Handmade, Andy, SPI Gallery, NAIA Lagos and Sara via Pinterest

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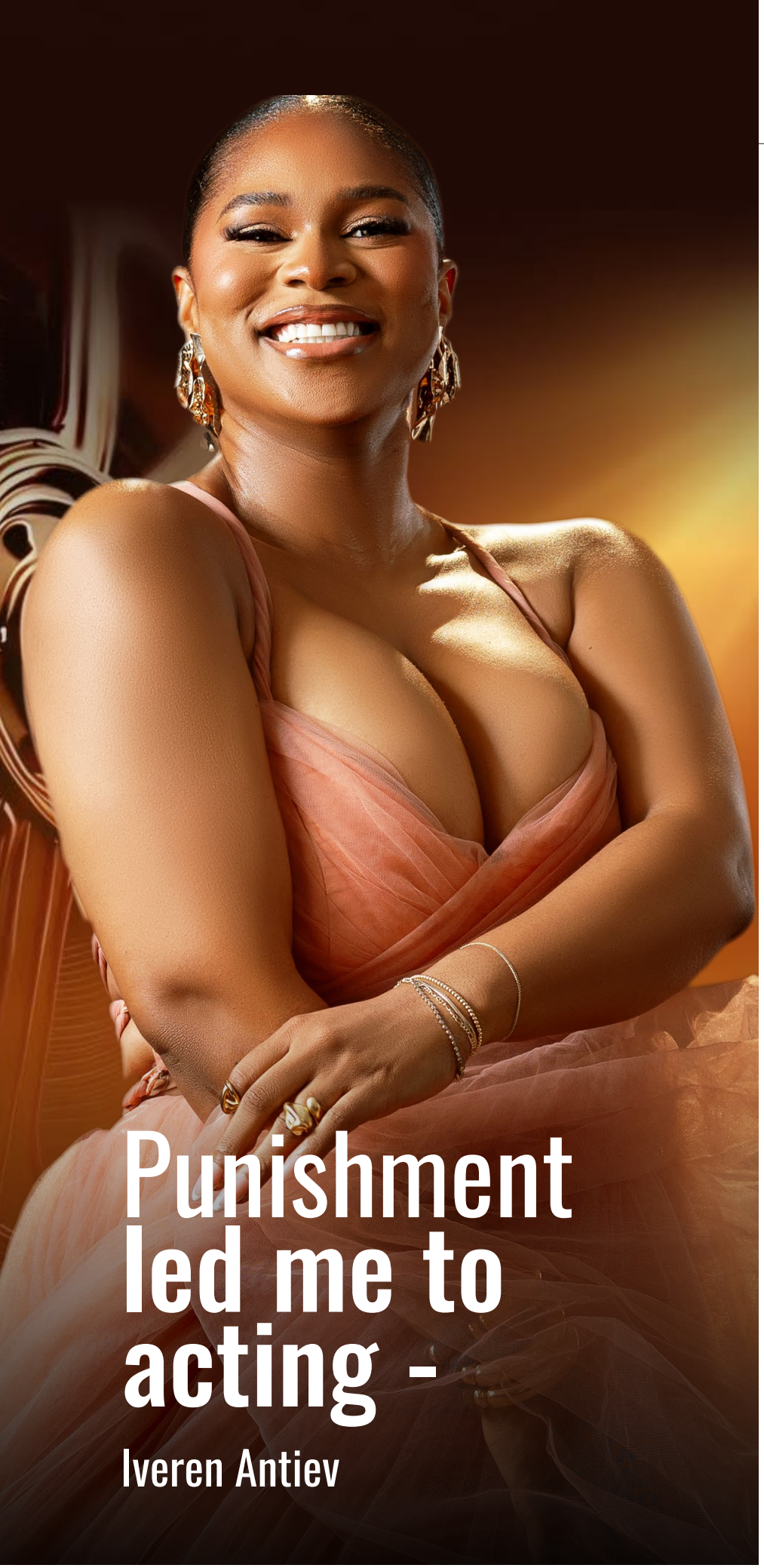
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Punishment led me to acting - Iveren Antiev

> *I spent about two or three years at home trying to get into law."*
>
> — IVEREN ANTIEV

university I was considering did not have accreditation for the course at the time, and I kept going round in circles. Eventually, my dad said they should let me do what I wanted. I studied theatre arts, and here we are.

First job

After university, I went to Royal Arts Academy because I wanted to learn film acting. I had studied theatre, but I knew working on screen would be different. While I was there, we did some classwork that Auntie Emem Isong liked. She invited me to act in a film. That was how I got my first job, *Close to Perfect*.

Mr & Mrs Right

Working on Mr & Mrs Right was fun. Some of my friends from film school were on set, so it didn't feel like I had been thrown into a strange place.

The experienced actors were kind to us too. I think they knew we were students from the academy. They were willing to guide us and help us feel comfortable.

Stage and screen

Theatre teaches you to use your voice. The person sitting at the back of the auditorium needs to hear you, even if the hall is full.

On a film set, the microphone is close to you. I had to learn to control my voice and reduce my gestures. On stage, your expressions have to reach the audience. With film, the camera is right there and picks up the smallest thing.

That transition wasn't completely smooth. I had to unlearn some of my stage habits.

Career break

After Mr & Mrs Right, I went to Kano for my national youth service. I had to be there, so I was away from acting for about a year. When I finished in 2019, I moved to Lagos and picked up from where I had left off.

I never wondered whether acting would work out. I felt that this was what I was meant to do. I'm happiest when I'm

filming. The work is hard, but I feel at peace on set. Nothing else gives me that same sense of fulfilment.

Roles

Dr Doofan Adasu taught me something about myself. She was one of the most stubborn characters I've played, but she was also resilient. Once she set her mind on something, she kept going, even if she had to do it alone.

I could relate to that. I'm goal-oriented. When I know where I'm going, I try to stay focused, regardless of what is happening around me.

I also played a woman with cancer in another film. That role took a toll on me, but what stayed with me most happened after the film came out. People sent messages about their own experiences. One person told me they had just lost an elder sister to cancer. I still think about that character and those messages.

Rejection

Rejection is a big part of acting. There are periods when you are not working, and it is easy to question yourself.

I remind myself that losing a role does not always mean my talent is in question. Sometimes you simply do not fit the world the production is trying to create. They might need someone with a particular look, height or build.

You are allowed to feel disappointed. Take a few days and cry if you need to. But you have to come out of it and keep going.

Challenges

People see the finished film and think acting is easy. They see your makeup and costume and assume you just turned up, looked good, and said your lines.

They don't see the time you spend learning those lines or researching your character. You also have to understand the other people in the story. Even if you appear on screen for only two minutes, a lot of work may have gone into that performance.

Awashima

When I read Awashima's story in A Land Apart, I understood her work ethic straight away. She was a woman in a large, male-dominated organisation. She knew she had to work hard and prove herself.

What took me longer to understand was her fear. I kept thinking, "You are brilliant. Why are you afraid to speak up for yourself?" That fear affected how she dealt with the people at work and the family she married into.

As I spent more time with the character, I understood that she knew how dangerous some of those people could be. She had reason to be afraid.

First daughters

I spoke with first daughters while preparing for Awashima. I learnt that you don't have to be the first child in a family for responsibilities to fall on you. Sometimes being the first girl is enough.

A lot of the decisions the women described were shaped by the people depending on them. One woman told me that her need to care for her brothers influenced when she married and whom she married.

Those conversations helped me understand why Awashima could be in a bad situation and still find it difficult to leave. She had family members depending on her.

> *"I had to unlearn some of my stage habits."*
>
> — IVEREN ANTIEV

Silence

There is a scene where Awashima has information that could change the course of the story if she shares it. I wanted her to speak. I kept thinking, "Just say it."

But she didn't. It was almost as though she hoped somebody would understand without her saying anything. I was thinking, "Nobody is psychic here. You have to use your words."

That scene frustrated me. At the same time, I understood why speaking was difficult for her.



Working with senior actors

Working with the senior actors on A Land Apart taught me that you need discipline and humility if you want to go far.

I watched them closely. If Richard Mofe-Damijo's call time was 2 pm, he could arrive by 1.30 pm. They were also approachable. If they saw an actor sitting alone, they might come over to check whether the person was okay or had eaten.

It didn't matter how much they had achieved. They respected the work and the people around them. Seeing that made an impression on me. Discipline can take you further than talent.

Support

I'm fortunate to have my family and friends, but I would single out my manager and my brother.

My manager knows so much about the entertainment industry. When I have a question, I know I can ask her. There are times when you doubt your work or question whether you are moving at the right pace. I speak to her and my brother when I feel that way.

Life outside acting

When I'm not filming, I go to the gym, see my friends and take acting classes when I can. But I like being at home. I'm happy to stay in and mind my business.

I also farm. I'm from Benue, so perhaps that part won't surprise you.

Social media

The characters people see me play can be very different from who I am. On social media, I try to be myself, but I'm careful because things can easily be misunderstood.

If I didn't need social media for my work, I probably wouldn't be there. I'm a little afraid of that space.

Future roles

I don't think a role would scare me. I enjoy a challenge. When a character takes me outside my comfort zone, I want to see whether I can make it work.

Some roles take longer to settle into. I once played a sex worker, and I had to confront the stigma I had absorbed about women who do that work. That was harder than anything the script asked me to do. The more demanding a role is, the more interested I am in finding my way into it.


JOHNNIE WALKER
Blue Label
JOHNNIE WALKER
Blue Label



Are you speaking the language your partner can hear?

by Dolly Ohanyere

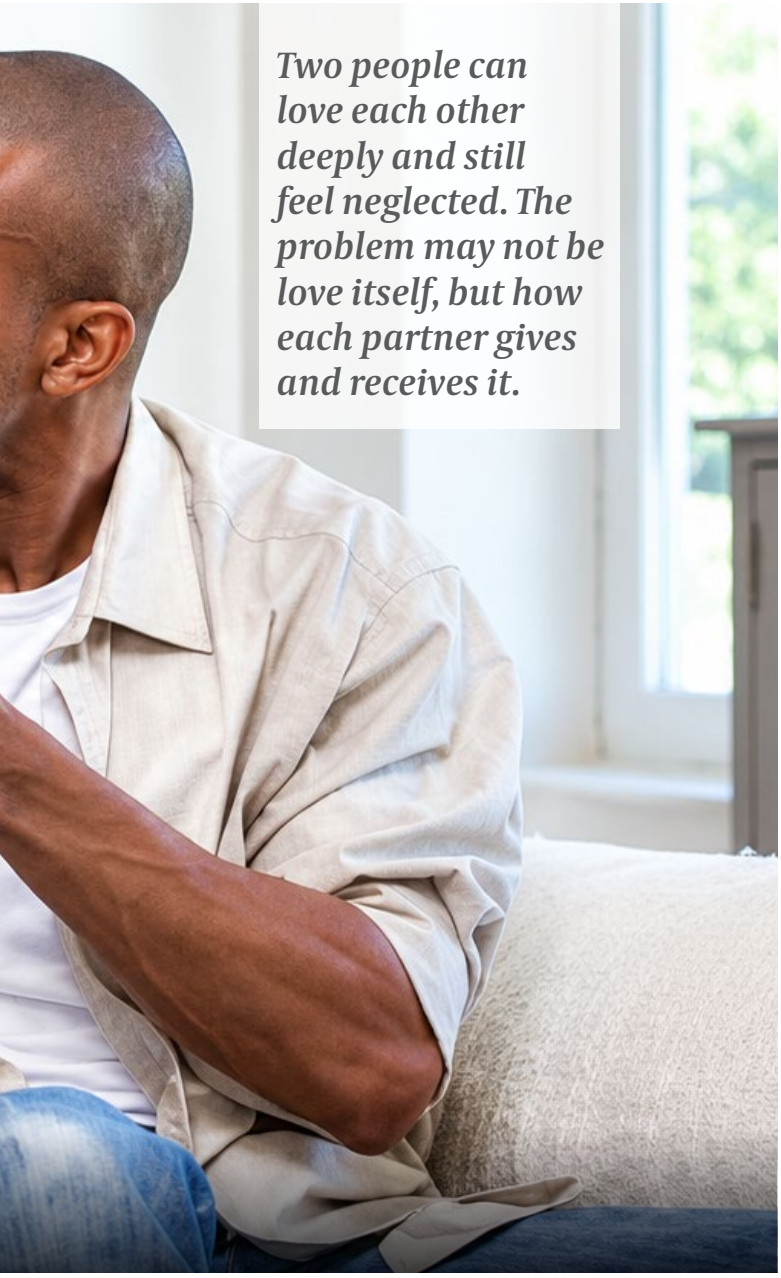
Dolly Ohanyere is a lawyer, relationship and marriage counsellor, NLP practitioner, and founder of The Healthy Marriage Hub and The Rediscovering Room. She writes on relationships and emotional growth from a faith-based perspective and believes that marriages can thrive.

There is a conversation I have had with more couples than I can count. One person says: "I do so much for this relationship", and the other person says: "I feel so unloved."

They are both telling the truth, and that is precisely the problem.

One of the most important discoveries in relationship coaching is this: love is not one universal language. It is five, and most people spend their entire relationship giving love in the language they themselves speak, without realising their partner is waiting to hear something entirely different.

The five love languages, a concept developed by Dr Gary Chapman, describe the five primary ways people give and receive love: words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, physical touch, and receiving gifts. Most people have one or two dominant languages - the ones that make them feel most



Two people can love each other deeply and still feel neglected. The problem may not be love itself, but how each partner gives and receives it.

deeply loved when they receive them, and the ones they most naturally express when they want to show love.

The gap happens when partners speak different languages. A man who expresses love through acts of service - fixing things, providing, planning- may feel deeply unappreciated when his partner does not enthusiastically respond to his gestures. His partner, whose language is words of affirmation, is receiving the acts of service but not feeling the love because nobody is saying the words she needs to hear. He is giving, she is receiving, and both of them feel unloved.

This is not a love problem; it is a translation problem, and translation problems can be solved.

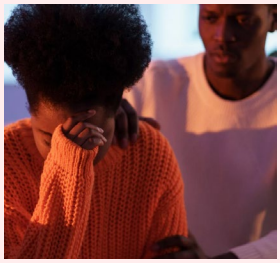
The solution begins with knowing your own language. Not what you think it should be. What it actually is. Then it requires the willingness to learn your partner's language and speak it deliberately, even when it does not come naturally. That is not performance; that is love in practice.

5 signs you and your partner have a love language gap and what to do about it:



1. You feel unappreciated despite doing a lot

If you are consistently giving but feeling unseen, ask yourself: "am I giving in my language or in theirs?" Your partner may be receiving exactly what you are giving, and still not feeling loved because acts of service do not speak to them the way words would.



2. You feel unloved despite your partner's efforts

If your partner is clearly trying but you consistently feel empty in the relationship, consider whether their expressions of love are reaching you in a language you actually understand. The love may be real, but the translation may simply be off.



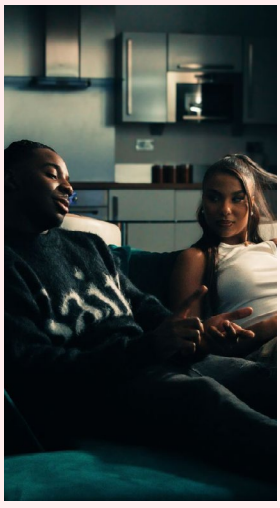
3. Your arguments often circle back to the same feeling

Arguments that consistently produce the phrase "I don't feel loved" or "I feel taken for granted" are often love language arguments in disguise. The issue is rarely the specific incident. It is the accumulated sense of not being received in the right language.



4. Learn your language first

Reflect honestly on what makes you feel most loved. When has a partner made you feel deeply valued? What specifically did they do or say? That memory is your love language map. Start there.



5. Have the conversation deliberately

Ask your partner directly: What makes you feel most loved? What do I do that makes you feel most appreciated? And then listen to the answer without defending what you have already been doing. The goal is not to be right; the goal is to be understood, and to understand.

Most relationship dissatisfaction is not about the absence of love. It is about love being given in a language the other person does not speak. Learn the language and then speak it consistently.

Photos by Magnific & Dina, marriage.com, Amorette, nemisnaps via Pinterest

Where to go



25 places for a night out in Lagos

Lagos truly owns the night, and the energy of the city completely changes once the sun goes down. From dodging chaotic traffic to spotting your favorite Afrobeats stars popping bottles in Victoria Island, the adrenaline here never stops.

Bogobiri House

Address: Ikoyi, Lagos
Opening Hours: Daily (Open during standard hospitality hours)

Overview: Bogobiri House brings together art, Nigerian food, and live music in an unmistakably Afrocentric setting. Its carved furniture and paintings provide plenty to admire while performances on selected nights keep the evening lively. It is an ideal spot for anyone who wants to enjoy good food and music while still holding a comfortable conversation across the table.

NOK by Alára

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Tuesday to Sunday: 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM, 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM (Friday & Saturday until 10:30 PM); Closed Mondays

Overview: NOK by Alára offers a relaxed, unhurried dining experience filled with striking African art and a colourful outdoor garden. Featuring a menu that draws from different parts of the continent, it provides a calm and sophisticated environment for friends looking to catch up over great food.

The House Lagos

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily: 10:00 AM – 2:00 AM

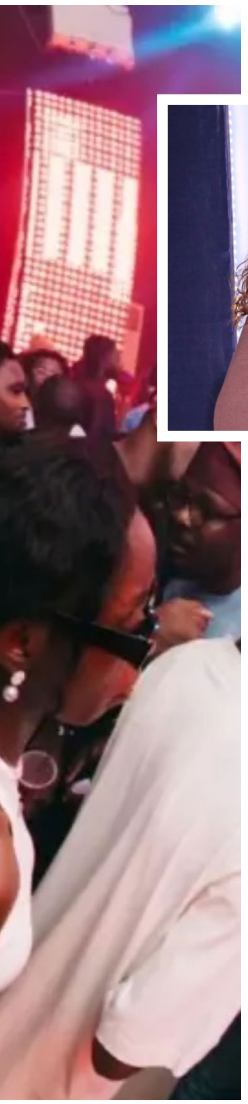
Overview: Designed to feel like visiting a stylish home rather than a traditional restaurant, The House Lagos features distinct indoor rooms and cozy outdoor corners. The comfortable seating, food, and ambient music create an energetic yet intimate atmosphere for an effortless night out.

Cactus Restaurant

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday to Thursday: 7:30 AM – 10:00 PM; Friday & Saturday: 7:30 AM – 10:30 PM; Sunday: 7:30 AM – 10:00 PM

Overview: Providing a welcome escape from city noise, Cactus Restaurant is best known for its breezy waterfront terrace. Guests can enjoy meals by the water as the weather cools down, complemented by live band performances on selected nights for a familiar and easygoing vibe.







New Afrika Shrine

Address: 1 NERDC Road, Agidingbi, Ikeja

Opening Hours: Open 24 hours daily (Best vibrant energy after 7:00 PM)

Overview: The legendary spiritual home of Afrobeat, run by the iconic Kuti family. Far from a polished VIP lounge, this massive open-air cultural hub offers a raw, completely authentic Lagos experience filled with sweat, palm wine, heavy political consciousness, and hypnotic live music.

Dynasty Lagos

Address: 24 Idejo Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: Dynasty Lagos offers a sleek, high-energy environment designed for guests looking to experience the vibrant nightlife of Victoria Island. With stylish interiors and a lively crowd, it stands out as a prime spot for late-night socializing and upscale partying.

Buzz Barr

Address: 30 Adetokunbo Ademola Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: Buzz Barr is a popular staple on a bustling Victoria Island strip, known for its electric atmosphere, vibrant music policy, and social crowd. It is a go-to destination for anyone wanting to kick off an energetic night out with drinks and good company.

Shiro Lagos

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday to Thursday & Sunday: 12:30 PM – 12:00 AM; Friday & Saturday: 12:30 PM – 1:00 AM

Overview: Shiro Lagos delivers a polished Pan-Asian dining experience defined by high ceilings, dramatic interiors, and curated music. The atmosphere transitions smoothly from a calm dinner setting into a livelier nighttime lounge as the evening progresses.

Terra Kulture

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily: 9:00 AM – 10:00 PM

Overview: A vibrant cultural hub where an evening can seamlessly transition from authentic Nigerian cuisine to a play, concert, or live performance. It is a premier destination for visitors looking to combine dining with rich local arts and entertainment.

Piano Bistro

Address: Delborough Lagos, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily (Operating during hotel dining hours)

Overview: Located within The Delborough Lagos, Piano Bistro maintains a refined, tranquil mood with elegant interiors and gentle live piano music. The soft background sound ensures guests can dine and chat comfortably, making it well-suited for quiet dinners or small celebrations.

RSVP Poolside

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily (Evenings and late night)

Overview: Tucked behind RSVP's main dining room, The Poolside offers open-air seating, music, and an informal vibe. It strikes the right balance for friends looking to unwind, eat, and enjoy the night without diving into a crowded club.

Circa Non Pareil (Penthouse/Lounge)

Address: 12 Mandilas Road, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: Perched with striking views in Lekki Phase 1, Circa Non Pareil combines sophisticated penthouse lounging with a vibrant nightlife pulse. The space is ideal for guests seeking a mix of fine dining, signature cocktails, and a chic party atmosphere after dark.

W Bar Lounge

Address: LASWA Yard, Under Falomo Bridge, Ikoyi, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: Set against a unique waterfront backdrop under the Falomo Bridge, W Bar Lounge offers an open-air vibe complete with cool breezes, good music, and an energetic crowd looking to unwind by the water.

Escape Nightclub

Address: 234B Adeola Odeku Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Nightly

Overview: Located on one of Victoria Island's most famous avenues, Escape Nightclub delivers a high-octane clubbing experience. Known for its celebrity sightings and vibrant party energy, it is a staple of Lagos nightlife.

355 Restaurant and Lounge

Address: 9A Oko Awo Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: 355 blends a classic Mexican-inspired dining experience with a lively lounge setting. As the evening progresses, the atmosphere shifts smoothly from a relaxed dinner spot into an energetic hub for late-night drinks and socializing.

Nitro Nightclub

Address: 14 Adeola Hopewell Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Nightly

Overview: Nitro Nightclub is built for serious nightlife enthusiasts, featuring heavy basslines, dynamic lighting, and a packed dance floor. It is a premier destination in Victoria Island for dancing late into the morning hours.

Island Breeze

Address: Landmark Beach, Water Corporation Road, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

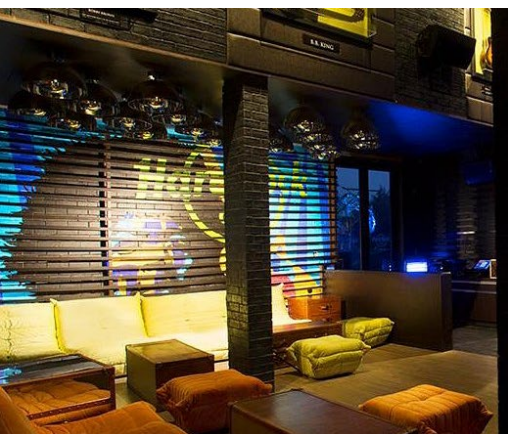
Overview: Island Breeze brings a coastal, festive atmosphere to the shoreline of Landmark Beach. Guests can enjoy music, drinks, and ocean views in an open-air setting that feels like a permanent beach party.

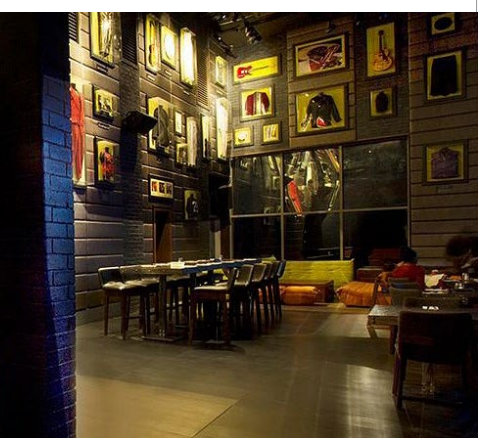
Bay Lounge

Address: Plot 10, Admiralty Road, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: A long-standing favorite in Lekki, Bay Lounge offers a relaxed waterfront terrace overlooking the water. It seamlessly transitions from a breezy spot for evening drinks and grilled platters into a lively weekend hangout.







The Vibe Lagos

Address: 16b Akin Olugbade Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily

Overview: True to its name, The Vibe Lagos delivers an energetic blend of great music, social networking, and nightlife culture. It draws a stylish crowd looking for an electric atmosphere right in the middle of Victoria Island.



Cage Lagos

Address: No. 2 Shalom Street, Ago Palace Way, Lagos.

Opening Hours: Daily (with club setups running Friday – Sunday)

Overview: Cage Lagos brings a premium, upscale Island-style nightlife experience to the Mainland. Combining a beach-like poolside aesthetic with a high energy nightclub, it is a highly popular, visually striking spot for groups looking to enjoy Afrobeats, elite DJ sets, an energetic crowd without crossing the bridge.

Club Quilox

Address: 873 Ozumba Mbadiwe Avenue, Victoria Island

Opening Hours: Wednesday to Sunday, 10:00 PM – 8:00 AM (Closed Mondays and Tuesdays)

Overview: This is West Africa's most iconic luxury megaclub. Drenched in rich gold and red lighting, it is a high-octane paradise for big spenders, corporate moguls, and A-list celebrities looking to pop bottles and dance to world-class Afrobeats DJs until the sun comes up.

Sky Bar Rooftop

Address: Lagoon Compound, 1c Ozumba Mbadiwe Avenue, Victoria Island

Opening Hours: Monday to Sunday, 6:00 PM – 2:00 AM

Overview: Perched comfortably above the city's chaos, this high-end rooftop lounge serves up panoramic waterfront views and premium cocktails. It provides a sophisticated, breezy atmosphere that is perfect for a relaxed early-evening social hour or a romantic date night.



Zaza Lagos

Address: 19 Agoro Odiyan Street, Victoria Island

Opening Hours: Wednesday to Sunday, 7:00 PM – 2:00 AM (Closed Mondays and Tuesdays)

Overview: A stylish restaurant and high-energy playground that flawlessly transitions from fine dining to interactive theater shows and late-night dancing. It attracts an exclusive, fashion-forward crowd looking for great food, upscale design, and high-energy music in a more intimate setting.

Kaly Restaurant and Bar

Address: Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Daily: 12:00 PM – 12:00 AM

Overview: Kaly combines high-end rooftop dining with sweeping panoramic views of Victoria Island and Eko Atlantic. After sunset, the open-air setting sparkles with city lights, offering selected live entertainment alongside a relaxed space to eat and talk.

Hard Rock Cafe Lagos

Address: Oniru, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday to Thursday: 12:30 PM – 10:00 PM; Friday to Sunday: 12:30 PM – 12:00 AM

Overview: Set against a stunning beachfront backdrop, Hard Rock Cafe Lagos offers spacious seating and regular live music. Whether catching a high-energy performance or enjoying a relaxed ocean view during a quieter program, it delivers a classic social experience.

If you want to unwind with smooth acoustic sets or soak up high-energy Fuji and highlife rhythms, the city's live music venues offer something for every mood.



Top live music venues and hangouts in Lagos

The Atlantic Grill (Federal Palace Hotel & Casino)

Location: 6-8 Ahmadu Bello Way, Victoria Island, Lagos
Opening Hours: Saturdays only: 4:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Enjoy a premium, family-friendly outdoor dining experience at the signature Atlantic Saturday Grill, which features an extensive "all-you-can-eat" buffet of smoky barbecue meats, lamb chops, ocean-fresh fish, and classic local sides.

To complement all these, the venue brings out an incredible Resident Live Band and talented vocalists every Saturday. They play a rhythmic, soulful mix of highlife, contemporary pop, and classic old-school African hits, setting a relaxed yet vibrant mood that regularly gets diners up and dancing into the evening.

LiVE! Lounge

Location: 15 Idejo Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Sunday: 4:00 PM – 2:00 AM (Closed Mondays).

A cosy, intimate hideaway built for live performance lovers. Friday nights showcase their In-House Live Band playing Afrofunk, neo-soul, and R&B.

Cloud 9 (Angle Villa)

Location: 1 Ogbunike Street, Lekki Phase 1, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday – Sunday: 5:00 PM – 3:00 AM

A serene, upscale cigar lounge and bar inside Angle Villa. Thursday nights offer a mellow, jazzy undertone with live musicians and saxophonists.









Afefeyeye Restaurant

Location: 41 Ogundana Street, Allen Avenue, Ikeja, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday – Sunday: 12:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Enjoy rich palm wine, music and live acoustic highlife bands that set a warm, nostalgic mood for a relaxed evening.
With vintage blends of Nigerian art and authentic local dishes into a cozy space where creatives and movie lovers hang out.

DANI Restaurant & Bar (The Delborough)

Location: 5th Floor, The Delborough, Bishop Aboyade Cole Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday – Sunday: 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM

An ultra-luxury rooftop restaurant inside The Delborough Lagos offering upscale fine dining, striking marble decor, and panoramic city views.

The Vibe Lagos

Location: 16B Akin Olugbade Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Monday – Sunday: 12:00 PM – 3:00 AM

An upscale indoor-outdoor lounge that transitions from a daytime lunch spot into a vibrant nightlife hub. Sundays feature live music from the Metro Band and special guests like Queen Ayo Balogun.

Tag Lagos

Location: 32b Musa Yar'Adua Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Wednesday & Sunday: 5:00 (Closed Mondays)

A trendy lifestyle lounge for the creative youth class. Thursday nights feature contemporary session bands playing acoustic-heavy Afrobeats and chart-toppers.

Sinatra Place

Location: 16B Ladipo Oluwole Street, Ogba, Ikeja, Lagos

Opening Hours: Open 24 hours daily (Live band shows start around 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM)

A Mainland hangout with an outdoor bar, pool area, and indoor club. Friday nights feature the Trinity Band, while Sundays bring Jùjú rhythms from King Jide Harmony.

Shades Social

Location: 1 Anifowoshe Street, off Kofo Abayomi Street, Victoria Island, Lagos

Opening Hours: Tuesday – Thursday: 11:00 AM – 4:00

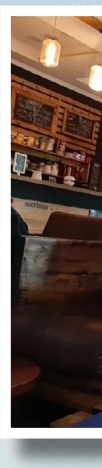
A British-style pub and sports bar. Thursday and Sunday nights feature energetic cover bands, while the first Wednesday of the month hosts saxophonist Yemi Sax.

Best *Coffee* shops across the city

by Chidinma Enweani

Whether you need a quiet spot to work on your laptop, a sunny place for weekend breakfast, or a really good cup of coffee, Nigeria's coffee space is growing fast.

These great coffee shops double as stylish spaces, creative hubs, and top food spots.





Coffee Bar, Abuja

Sleek, minimalist, and intensely functional, this venue is built for focus and flavor. The atmosphere is sharp and modern, designed with clean lines, comfortable seating arrangements, and a serious dedication to productivity. They serve meticulously roasted coffee beans brewed into potent americanos, smooth flat whites, and refreshing iced beverages.

Why you should visit: You should visit if you are a remote worker, digital nomad, or creative professional looking for high-speed Wi-Fi paired with a serious caffeine kick to power through your deadlines.

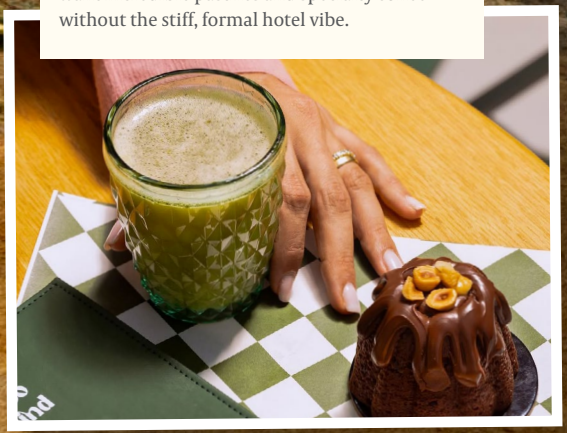




Ziya Federal Palace

The Lobby Café x Ziya brings Ziya Delicacy Boutique's cult-favourite bakes, pastries, and signature drinks straight into the iconic Federal Palace Hotel lobby.

Why you should visit: It is the ultimate spot for a chic, low-key catch-up or a solo treat when you want incredible pastries and specialty coffee without the stiff, formal hotel vibe.



Café Flour

This intimate neighbourhood favorite smells entirely of comfort the second you cross the threshold. The ambiance is warm, unpretentious, and deeply welcoming, featuring rustic wooden accents and gentle lighting that encourages you to linger. They excel in artisanal baking, serving fresh-out-of-the-oven loaves, buttery croissants, and robust, expertly pulled espresso shots.

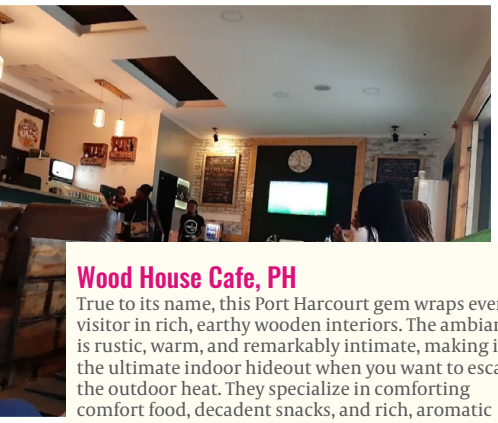
Why you should visit: Good for a quiet breakfast date or when you need a comforting slice of homemade cake paired with a hot cup of coffee to reset your day.



Pink Bear, Abuja

Tucked away in the capital, this pastel-drenched dreamscape is a whimsical escape from the city's formal pace. The interior is bathed in soft pink hues and plush, cozy seating, making it feel less like a traditional eatery and more like a curated film set. They specialize in velvety lattes, Instagram-worthy sweet treats, and delicate pastries that taste just as good as they look.

Why you should visit: Perfect for a relaxed afternoon catch-up with close friends or whenever your social media feed is screaming for a vibrant, cheerful backdrop.



Wood House Cafe, PH

True to its name, this Port Harcourt gem wraps every visitor in rich, earthy wooden interiors. The ambiance is rustic, warm, and remarkably intimate, making it the ultimate indoor hideout when you want to escape the outdoor heat. They specialize in comforting comfort food, decadent snacks, and rich, aromatic coffee brews.

Why you should visit: To enjoy a quiet afternoon with a good novel or when you are craving a grounded, unpretentious space to slow down your pace.

ART CAFE, Lagos

A legendary bohemian sanctuary steeped in the creative history of the city. The atmosphere is eclectic, artistic, and bursting with soul, featuring vintage furniture, walls plastered with local art, and an effortlessly cool crowd. They serve a diverse menu of comforting meals, fresh juices, and dependable coffee classics.

Why you should visit: Visit if you would love to soak up the inspiring creative energy, sketch in your notebook, or lose track of hours conversing with fellow artists, writers, and thinkers.



Dulce Cafe & Bakery, Lagos

As a long-standing fixture on the island's luxury dining scene, this spot delivers refined elegance on every level. The ambiance is upscale, polished, and sophisticated, featuring chic contemporary furnishings and an expansive display of confections. They are masters of luxury baking, offering gourmet desserts, heavy-duty breakfast spreads, and premium coffee pairings.

Why you should visit: Beautiful spot to celebrate a milestone, impress a business date, or treat yourself to high-end pastries in an environment that feels effortlessly exclusive.

Nikkybell cafe, PH

A warm, community-driven neighborhood fixture that prioritizes comfort above all else. The atmosphere is friendly, unpretentious, and instantly puts you at ease the moment you walk through the door. They serve dependable, classic espresso drinks alongside comforting local and continental snacks.

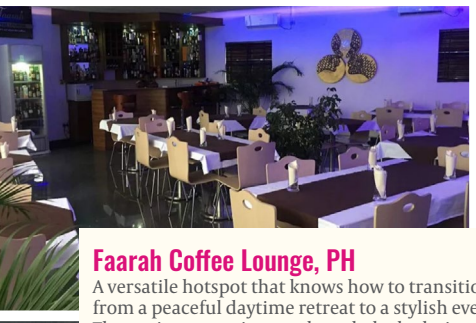
Why you should visit: Pay a visit when you want to bypass the scene-y pretension and simply enjoy a genuinely good cup of coffee served with a smile in a relaxed environment.



TOP BEANS. Coffee, Lagos

This is where casual coffee drinkers transform into purists. The atmosphere is sleek and dedicated, stripped of unnecessary fluff to put the absolute focus on the craft of brewing. They source exceptional beans and employ precise, scientific extraction methods to create everything from delicate pour-overs to rich, concentrated espresso shots.

Why you should visit: Visit if you view coffee as an art form and want to experience what a truly well-roasted, masterfully brewed cup of coffee tastes like.



Faarah Coffee Lounge, PH

A versatile hotspot that knows how to transition smoothly from a peaceful daytime retreat to a stylish evening lounge. The environment is upscale and plush, designed with mood lighting and comfortable lounge seating that invites you to stay a while. They craft exceptional coffees alongside a sophisticated menu of small plates and specialty drinks. Why you should visit: You should visit when your day calls for a seamless shift from catching up on emails over morning espresso to winding down with upscale relaxation in the evening.



Marley and Blue, PH

A design-forward, trendy addition to Port Harcourt's expanding culinary map. The aesthetic is vibrant, youthful, and contemporary, filled with clever design details and a buzzing social atmosphere. They offer inspired brews, creative drink formulations, and delicious pastries that cater to modern palates.

Why you should visit: You should visit if you want to be seen at the newest cool spot in town, catch up with your social circle, or simply enjoy a wonderfully crafted latte in a genuinely inspiring space.

Cafe One Yaba

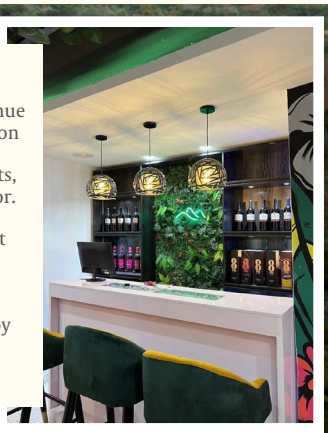
Nestled right in the pulsating heart of the mainland tech district, this space acts as an incubator for ideas and caffeine alike. The vibe is innovative, young, and dynamic, functioning seamlessly as both a collaborative workspace and a relaxed social lounge. They supply high-speed internet, steady workspace power, and reliable, energizing coffee options.

Why you should visit: You should visit if you want to plug into the local tech and startup ecosystem, collaborate with bright minds, or simply need a buzzing, productive atmosphere to get things done.

Tahilla Café, PH

Sleek, modern, and effortlessly chic, this venue brings a touch of metropolitan sophistication to the Garden City. The decor features contemporary lighting, clean seating layouts, and a stylish crowd that matches the interior. They serve a diverse lineup of artisanal coffees, specialty teas, and delightful dessert selections.

Why you should visit: You should visit to kickstart your weekend with style or to enjoy a trendy midday hangout that feels fresh, upbeat, and visually appealing.



Abuja's buka boom

by Ajuluchukwu Brown



Photos by Ajuluchukwu Brown

From trays of steaming rice to live-fire grills glowing by the roadside, a new generation of street bukas is changing how Abuja eats, socialises and experiences the night. There is something unmistakable about a buka at night. It begins with the fire.



A small flame burns beneath a blackened grill. Smoke rises into the evening air, carrying the smell of roasted meat, pepper and charcoal.

Under a bare bulb or a string of electric lights, a tray of steaming rice sits beside a bowl of stew, fried chicken, boiled eggs and assorted meat.

Plastic chairs occupy whatever space the street permits. A customer pulls over. Another walks in. Someone calls for a plate of rice. Another asks for extra pepper. The vendor reaches for a spoon, serves the food onto a disposable plate, and moves on to the next customer. There may be no elaborate interior, polished cutlery or air-conditioning. Yet, increasingly, this is becoming

part of Abuja's night-time aesthetic. The street has become the dining room. And the buka is becoming more than a place to eat.

The return of the street buka

For generations, the Nigerian buka has represented inexpensive, accessible food. Its appeal has always been straightforward: food that is ready, filling and relatively affordable. But Abuja's evolving street-food culture is giving the old concept a new identity. Across different parts of the city, roadside food sellers are turning ordinary spaces into informal restaurants. A tray of rice becomes the centrepiece. A live-fire grill provides both cooking and theatre. Plastic tables become dining spaces. Bright lights illuminate the food, while music, conversation and passing traffic provide the soundtrack. What emerges is not quite a restaurant and not quite a conventional roadside stall. It is a street experience, and that experience appears to be attracting a growing clientele.

Young professionals, artisans, drivers, students, civil servants and residents returning home late increasingly find themselves stopping by these food spots. For some, it is about price. For others, it is the food itself. For many, it is simply the atmosphere. But street food itself is not new to Nigeria.

Long before modern restaurants, lounges and food-delivery platforms became common, Nigerians ate akara and pap, masa, suya, roasted yam, roasted plantain, beans, corn, grilled fish and countless other delicacies prepared and sold within streets and communities. What is changing in Abuja is not the existence of street food, but its scale, presentation, variety and place within the city's modern lifestyle. Some street Bukas have developed into evening destinations where people come not only to eat, but to relax, meet friends, socialise and experience the city's nightlife.

For **Dr Jerome Peter Akogwu,** a hotelier and hospitality consultant, the development represents an important part of the city's evolving hospitality landscape.
"Street food is part of our culture and economy. We should not kill the culture; we should improve the standard," he said.

That distinction runs through the debate. The question is no longer whether street Bukas should exist. It is whether they can grow without losing the affordability, accessibility and informality that made them attractive in the first place.

Beauty of a tray of food

There is an aesthetic to the Nigerian street buka that formal restaurants often struggle to reproduce. It is the sight of food displayed openly. A large aluminium tray filled with jollof rice. Another containing fried rice. A bowl of steaming stew. Chicken stacked beside beef. Pepper arranged in small containers. Boiled eggs sitting beside the food. Fried plantain catching the light. Everything is visible. The customer does not need a menu. You look. You point. You ask the price. The food is served. That simplicity is part of the attraction. The tray becomes a kind of visual menu and sometimes an advertisement in itself. The fuller and more colourful the display, the more difficult it becomes for a passer-by to resist stopping.

Maryjane Chigbu, a street buka owner, believes the presentation is part of the attraction.
"The way we display the food makes it more attractive for customers," she said.

As Nigerians would put it, she added, *"Na eye dey chop first."* The food, in other words, sells itself.

Live fire, smoke and the street

Then there is the fire. For the street buka, fire is not merely a cooking tool. It is part of the spectacle. At a suya stand, the flames rise as meat is turned over the grill. At another spot, chicken is placed directly above glowing charcoal. Grilled fish crackles over the heat while smoke drifts towards the road. People gather around. Some watch the cooking. Others wait for their orders. The fire gives the street a different character. It creates warmth, movement, and smell. It announces that food is being prepared. Unlike a kitchen hidden behind the walls of a restaurant, the street kitchen is exposed. The customer sees the smoke. Sees the grill. Sees the meat being turned. Sees the rice being served. There is an element of theatre in it. The meal begins before the first bite.



The economics of the buka

Behind the romance of the street is a simple economic calculation. The buka allows an entrepreneur to enter the food business without the enormous investment required to establish a conventional restaurant. There may be no expensive interior. No sophisticated kitchen. No elaborate furniture. No large waiting area. The essentials can be considerably simpler: cooking equipment, food trays, tables, chairs, lighting and a strategic location. For **Maryjane,** the economics were central to her decision to enter the business.

> *"Street food is part of our culture and economy. We should not kill the culture."*
>
> — Hotelier and hospitality consultant Dr Jerome Peter Akogwu

She said the increase in street bukas was being driven by *"the current economic situation and the changing lifestyle of Nigerians."*

Workers, students and people constantly on the move, she observed, need meals that are affordable, accessible and quickly prepared. But the equation works from the supply side too.
"Starting a small food business can be more affordable than setting up a conventional restaurant. People wanted good food, affordable food they could easily access without spending too much. And that encouraged me to start first. Secondly, I love to cook. I love to eat my food," she said.

The combination of demand and relatively low entry costs, she believes, is helping to drive the proliferation of street Bukas.
"Street buka is very affordable to start, and you don't need a shop. You don't need to pay for a big rent."



That distinction is crucial. For many small entrepreneurs, the question is not simply whether there is a market for food. It is whether the cost of entering the formal restaurant business leaves enough money to actually cook and sell that food.

When rent pushes food onto the street

Behind the romance of the roadside meal is another reality: the price of commercial space. For a small food entrepreneur, the choice between opening a conventional restaurant and operating a buka can be a calculation of how much capital should go into the building and how much should go into the food.

Current property listings show just how sharply commercial rents vary across Abuja. In Gwarinpa, for instance, a 40-square-metre ground-floor shop on a tarred road is currently advertised at ₦5 million a year, while a 21-square-metre ground-floor shop on high-traffic 3rd Avenue is listed at ₦5.25 million. A 30-square-metre space on the same avenue is asking ₦7.5 million annually. Even a less expensive shop in Gwarinpa can still require more than ₦1 million annually. The cost does not always end with the rent. Some commercial arrangements come with service charges, agency and legal fees, caution deposits, and other expenses. For a small food entrepreneur, that is a considerable amount of money to commit before buying a single bag of rice.

For **Oluchukwu Chidera**, who has spent eight years running a buka, the calculation is not theoretical.

"Had I chosen to open a restaurant along the busy expressway, I would face exorbitant costs. The landlord in that area could demand up to ₦1 million each year just for the rent. I would likely have to sell a plate of egusi for around ₦5,000 to cover those costs," she said.

Once power, water and staff salaries are added, she said, the economics change dramatically. Instead, Chidera operates from Gwarinpa, where she pays ₦300,000 annually for a simple kiosk with a shade. That decision, she said, allows her to sell swallow and soup for about ₦1,200 while still making a profit.

Maryjane faced a similar calculation. She recalled being asked to pay about ₦2.7 million for a shop when she wanted to start.

"I had to settle for that open space where I would just have to put a canopy and pay for the space, maybe ₦100,000 for the space, ₦150,000. Some even collect ₦20,000 monthly," she said.

Her experience captures the central economics of the street buka: less money spent on premises can mean more flexibility in what is charged for the meal.

The street as a low-cost business model

Street buka business can begin with a cooking stand, a grill, a few tables, plastic chairs, lighting and food trays.

Elizabeth Dayo said this was precisely why she deliberately chose the buka model.

"I intentionally opted for the Buka model rather than establishing a traditional restaurant because I recognised the numbers just wouldn't add up otherwise. A shop in the upscale Wuse 2 area requires ₦1.2 million along with an additional service charge of ₦200,000," she said.

Her Area 1 operation costs ₦500,000 annually. The space is open-air, but Dayo has invested in fairy lights, clean tables and branding to give it some of the appeal of a café without taking on café-level occupancy costs. That, she said, allows her to sell meals for about ₦1,500 while still using fresh fish and quality cooking oil.

"The street buka culture is on the rise in Abuja, largely in response to the rising costs of rent and food. We serve as a crucial middle ground not labelled as 'cheap' due to uncleanliness but rather recognised for being affordable because of our innovative business model," she said.

Why pay millions for walls?

This raises a larger question. If the business can feed customers successfully without occupying an expensive conventional shop, why take on the additional cost? For some entrepreneurs, the answer is obvious. The food is the business. Not the building. A customer does not necessarily come to a Buka because the walls are beautiful. They come because the rice is good. Because the chicken is hot. Because the suya is fresh. Because the pepper is right. Because the food is affordable. Because the location is convenient. The physical environment matters, but it does not necessarily have to be expensive. It spends less on the building and more on the plate.

There is also an unexpected advantage to operating on the street. Visibility. A formal restaurant pays for a shop because the shop provides access to customers. The street Buka can sometimes obtain that same visibility without paying for premium commercial frontage. The fire becomes the signboard. The smoke becomes the advertisement. The tray becomes the display window. The customers become the publicity.



For Tunde Bakare, a Gwarinpa resident who spends long hours on the road, that accessibility is part of the appeal.

"As someone who spends 12 hours on the road daily, the rise of street bukas has been transformative. Previously, a single meal in a mall restaurant would cost upwards of ₦3,000. Now, for ₦1,200, I can have a substantial meal that



"The street Buka culture is on the rise in Abuja, largely in response to the rising costs of rent and food."

— Buka owner, Elizabeth Dayo

sustains me," he said.

Bakare said bukas had become increasingly accessible across the city and the attraction.

Rent becomes food price

The relationship between rent and food prices is not automatic; vendors have many other costs, but the principle is straightforward. A restaurant paying millions of naira in annual rent has to generate enough revenue to cover that expense alongside food, wages, power, water, security, maintenance, and other costs.

A smaller street operation with a much lower occupancy cost has fewer fixed expenses to recover. That gives it greater room to compete on price. Lower rent may help keep prices down, but rice, tomatoes, pepper, meat, fish, cooking oil, gas, electricity, packaging and transportation continue to rise.

The vendor is therefore caught between two pressures: customers who cannot absorb higher prices and costs that refuse to stay still. For customers, however, the most important advantage remains affordability. At a time when eating at formal restaurants can quickly become expensive, the buka offers a different proposition. You do not necessarily need to plan an outing. You do not need a reservation. You do not need to dress up. You simply stop. The meal can be eaten there or taken away.

For **Tonia Joy**, a teacher, the change is particularly visible in everyday life.
"Previously, accessing an affordable and filling meal required significant travel. Now, there is a buka at nearly every bus stop. For ₦800, I can eat well and still have money left," she said.

Buka's cultural rebrand

The change is not confined to economics. For a younger generation, the buka is also being visually reimagined.

Blessing Uka, a 21-year-old fashion designer in Utako, describes it as a cultural rebrand.
"From a creative perspective, Abuja bukas are undergoing a cultural rebrand. They are becoming intentional spaces. We now see painted murals, Ankara tablecloths and neon signage with phrases like 'Buka & Chill'," she said.

Buka on the street is not surviving because people cannot afford formal restaurants. It is increasingly becoming something people actively choose. The lower-cost model produces another gain: it allows more people to enter the food business. Someone who cannot raise the capital required to rent and furnish a conventional restaurant may still be able to start with a small food stand. One tray of rice becomes two. One grill becomes two. Two plastic tables become five. One assistant becomes three. A modest roadside operation becomes a recognisable food spot. That progression creates employment and demand for other small businesses. The vendor buys food from markets. The butcher supplies meat. The farmer supplies vegetables. The charcoal seller supplies fuel. The person selling disposable plates supplies packaging. The carpenter makes tables. The welder builds the grill. The electrician provides lighting. The street buka can therefore become a small economic ecosystem.

The public health question

This is where the celebration of the Buka renaissance meets its most serious qualification.

Dr Akogwu Jude, a pharmacist and public health expert, explained that street food should not automatically be regarded as unsafe simply



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Akogwu believes the conversation should therefore focus on standards rather than stereotypes. That distinction is important because the challenge is not necessarily the street itself. It is the conditions under which food is sourced, transported, stored, prepared, cooked and sold.

The veterinary public-health dimension

For **Dr Abubakar Bala Muhammed**, a veterinary public-health professional, the conversation must go even further beyond the vendor's table to the wider food chain.
"The concern should not be that street food is inherently unsafe. Rather, the public-health question is whether the conditions under which food is sourced, transported, stored, prepared, cooked and sold are sufficient to control hazards," he said.

His concern is particularly pronounced around foods of animal origin. Meat used for suya, poultry, fish, eggs and dairy products can carry foodborne hazards when animals, slaughtering processes, handling, storage or cooking are poorly controlled. That makes veterinary surveillance an important part of the equation.
"The public should be able to have confidence that meat has originated from an appropriately inspected source and has been



transported and stored under conditions that preserve its safety," Muhammed said.

It is a reminder that food safety begins long before a customer approaches a steaming tray. The journey starts with the source of the ingredients. It continues through transportation, storage and preparation. Only then does it arrive at the point of sale.

Muhammed also points to a wider occupational and zoonotic-disease dimension, particularly where informal meat supply chains are involved. His argument is not that street-food vendors or their customers are inherently exposed to disease. Rather, it is that the entire animal-to-food chain requires effective surveillance and control.

A one health approach

Muhammed takes the argument into the broader territory of One Health—the recognition that human health, animal health and environmental health are interconnected. For Abuja's street-food economy, that means food safety cannot sit entirely within one government department. Veterinary services, environmental-health personnel, public-health authorities, food regulators and other relevant agencies all have a role to play.

High-risk businesses handling meat, poultry, fish and dairy products should receive particular attention. Inspection should look beyond appearances to water supply, storage temperatures, food sources, personal hygiene, cooking practices, prevention of cross-contamination and waste disposal. Vendors, meanwhile, need practical training. Hand hygiene. Safe water. Temperature control.

Separation of raw and cooked food. Cleaning and disinfection. Pest control. Safe handling of meat and other animal products. These may sound basic. But in a sector where businesses operate under pressure from rent, weather, electricity, and rising food costs, maintaining those basics can become difficult without infrastructure and education.

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>
> — Veterinary public-health professional, Dr Abubakar Bala Muhammed

How to make Masa

Masa, also known as Waina, is more than just a dish that continues to thrive in the hearts of Northern Nigerians for generations. It's a fluffy, often slightly tangy, rice cake made from a fermented batter of rice a short-grain variety like "tuwo rice"), sometimes mixed with millet, maize, or sorghum, a unique combination that sets it apart from other rice-based dishes.



Renowned for its unique taste and texture, Masa has become a beloved snack or appetizer across the country, often enjoyed at special events, family gatherings, and at casual get-togethers. These fluffy golden brown cakes are typically served with a spicy pepper sauce or soup.

Ingredients

- 2 cups rice; use Tuwo Rice, Arborio, or Jasmine Rice
- 2 teaspoons active dry yeast
- ¼ cup water for proofing the yeast
- ¼ cup cooked rice, pre-cooked
- 2 tablespoons yogurt (optional)
- 1 small onion
- ½ inch ginger
- ½ cup water for blending
- 2-4 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- vegetable oil

Instructions

- The rice is soaked for several hours, the rice is first soaked for several hours or overnight, which helps soften the grains and allows for a smoother batter.
- After soaking, the rice is blended with water, cooked rice (which helps with the chewy texture), yeast, sugar, salt, and sometimes ingredients like onion or yogurt.
- The batter is then allowed to ferment for several hours, which makes the masa slightly sour and gives it a spongy texture. The longer the fermentation, the more pronounced the tangy flavor.
- Once the batter has fermented, season it with salt and add some baking powder to enhance the flavor and texture of the cooked Masa.



Kunun Zaki recipe

by Chidinma Enweani

Kunun Zaki is a popular, refreshing, and highly nutritious drink from Northern Nigeria. It is traditionally made from millet, sorghum, or maize. It has a unique, slightly spicy kick from ginger and cloves, balanced by a natural sweetness developed during a unique fermentation process.

- Here is a step-by-step recipe to make Kunun Zaki at home.

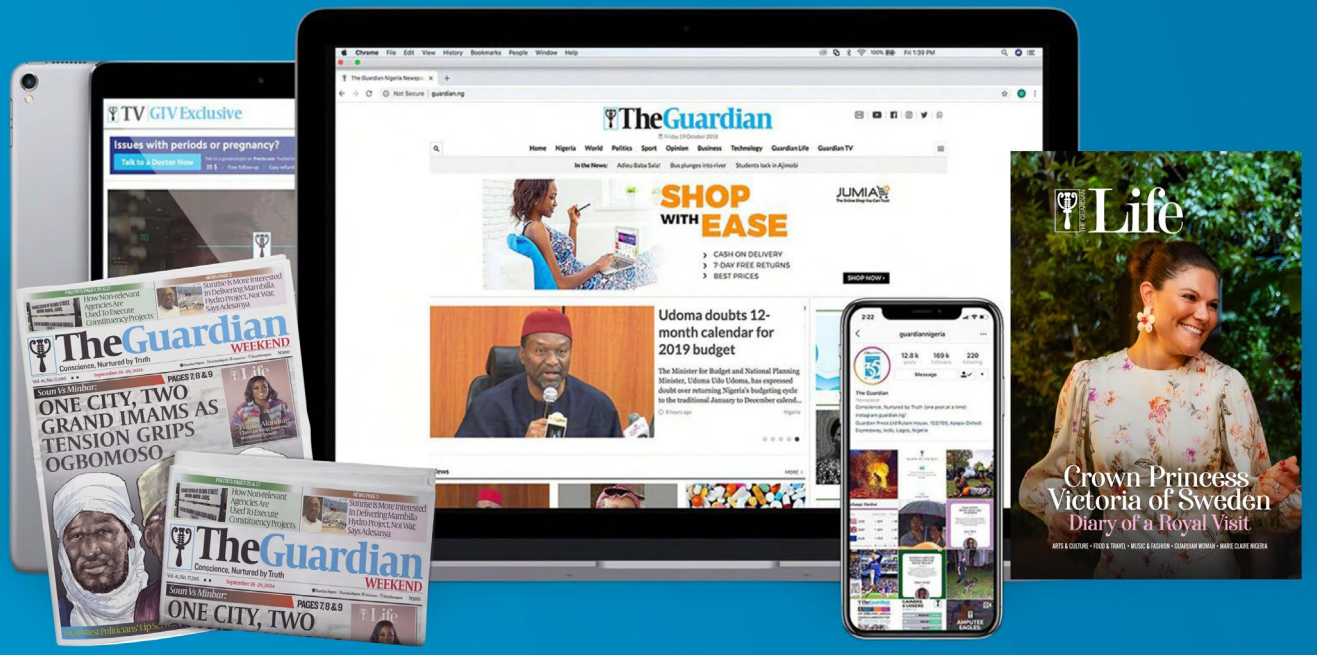
Ingredients

- 3 cups Millet grains (or a mix of millet and sorghum)
- 1 cup Sweet Potatoes (freshly peeled and chopped, or dried powder)
- 2 tablespoons Ginger (freshly grated)
- 1 tablespoon Cloves
- 1 medium stick Cinnamon (optional)
- Sugar to taste (optional, as the potatoes naturally sweeten it)
- Water

Instructions

- Wash millet or sorghum and soak in water for 24 to 48 hours, changing the water daily.
- Drain grains, add sweet potatoes, ginger, cloves, and black pepper, then blend into a smooth paste with a little water.
- Strain the paste using a muslin cloth, keep the extract, and divide it into two portions (one-quarter and three-quarters).
- Pour boiling water over the larger portion (three-quarters) while stirring to form a thick, custard-like paste.
- Let it cool, mix in the remaining raw portion with some water, cover, and let it ferment for 6 to 8 hours (or overnight).
- Strain out the chaff with a muslin cloth, sweeten with sugar to taste, and chill before serving.

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