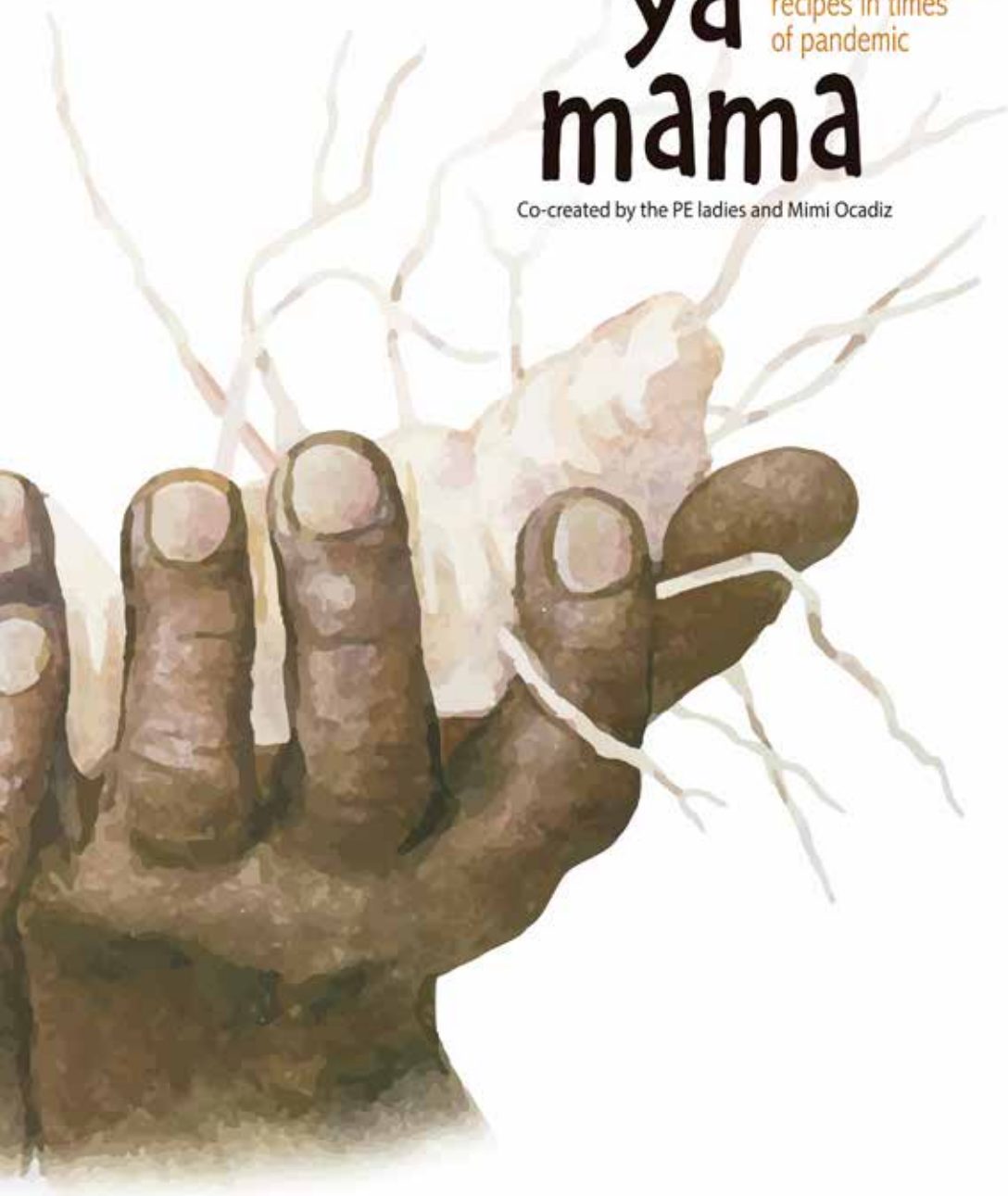


# Loboko ya mama

African homemade  
recipes in times  
of pandemic

Co-created by the PE ladies and Mimi Ocadiz





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<sup>1</sup> This book is a co-creation of the PE ladies, a group of eight forced migrant women from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo living in Gqeberha (South Africa) together with Mexican writer and scholar Miriam (Mimi) Ocadiz.

# Preface

*Dr Henrietta Nyamnjoh*  
*University of Cape Town*

During the hard lockdown in South Africa due COVID-19, there were very few social activities for people to indulge in. Food and the kitchen became even more so than before the nerve centre of households, trying out new recipes and exchanging recipes with friends. I recall going out to collect sourdough culture as I had the time to meticulously follow the steps to successfully bake a sourdough bread. Along with toilet paper and hand sanitizer, flour also made it onto the list of things that were hoarded by shops. People were bored and wanted to try out old recipes that brought back memories; they wanted to try new things that their friends were posting on Instagram. A vibrant cooking lesson culture also emerged on Facebook. Food became the 'Thing' to quell anxieties, bringing back into our busy lives the joys of 'slow cooking' that Alice Waters had long championed, temporarily stifling 'fast cooking' and fast foods. Through food, the kitchen table became more than ever a social glue, giving families the time to appreciate one another and remember recipes of old. Concomitantly, it was also food that we turned to for a solution to curbing, if not curing the spread of COVID-19. Various recipes, combinations and concoctions were widely circulated on social media platforms. This can also be seen in the women's recipes, such as that of Mama Yoyotte's 'Pondu Madesu' (p. 53-54), who likes using garlic and ginger because they are very potent to boost the immune system during COVID-19.

The collection of recipes in this book, thus, amplifies the power of food in times of uncertainty. Despite living one day at a time, the mothers were able to come together, virtually, to not only share their ways of eating with the world but also to invite the world to their kitchen table. Notwithstanding the grimness and uncertainty of the times, food gave hope, creating new communities, lasting bond, and memories. Food and cuisine —replete with the repertoire of recipes and the rituals of commensalism— became symbolic expressions of these women's sociality, both in the intimate domestic sphere and in relation to the larger group that shares a specific culinary complexities.



When we think of food, we think of the spaces that it affords one to commune with friends, families and loved ones. While food has been hailed —correctly so— for unpacking our identities and revealing the multiculturalism of who we are (according to acclaimed food author Donna Gabaccia), food also has the power to unite strangers and create lasting memories, as this collection reveal. The recipes in this book bring back lots of childhood memories and nostalgia for events –family gatherings– and all the stories found therein. Importantly, food has the ability to discipline, to create a renewed interest in ethnic cuisine, and to stay true to our roots, as these women have shown. Through our fascinating food journeys to Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Uganda (to name but a few), we are exposed to the preparation of fufu/foufou and Pondou, mouth-watering fried rice and pulao rice, as well as the traditional methods of preparing vegetables, all of which are traditionally African ways of slow cooking. The world as a global village has facilitated our access to these ethnic foods on the shelves owing to the rise in ethnic food stores that cater to migrant tastes. These enclaves of immigrants are able to obtain the foods they are accustomed to in their new homes in Port Elizabeth/Gqeberha, South Africa.

Mimi and this group of women recognise that understanding eating habits requires not one but several histories: of recurring human migrations and of consumption. Food is central to the ways migrants identify themselves, both individually and collectively. These women's attachment to gastronomic culture suggests that food is a marker of identity formation and development of the self. By the same token, mobilities have engendered new forms of conviviality through foods, as well as how migrants relate to ethnic food – soul food.



# Prologue

## *Loboko ya mama:*

### African homemade recipes in times of pandemic

*Foreword by Dr. Catherina Wilson*

It was dark, cold and rainy on the evening that Mimi called me to talk about readjusting her research plans. COVID-19 had engulfed the world in every sense, and after the first shock, we researchers were trying to figure out the details of its impact. What did the lockdown mean for research? Was it even important to think about research during the lockdown?

In the context of her PhD research, Mimi had travelled to Gqeberha (previously known as Port Elizabeth), in South Africa, a couple of months before. After testing the waters, she had met a group of women who she wanted to engage in her work. But then, in March 2020, all of a sudden Mimi had to leave, and a part of her was left behind in Gqeberha. Fortunately, Mimi had collected the phone numbers of the women, even though she had not yet got to know them very well, let alone been able to build trust – an essential ingredient in ethnographic research.

It takes courage and perseverance to be creative and flexible, and Mimi proved she was able to be both. I guess that was why she called me that night, to share her ideas out loud. I felt honoured that she had thought of me at this crossroads in her research. I don't recall giving her any sensible advice at the time; in fact, I was learning more from her experiences and questions than the other way round. Reciprocity: another important ingredient in science.

With time, Mimi managed to collect her thoughts to bring a new direction to her research. She worked through the limitations – distance and language barriers – and despite all the challenges, she managed to turn her research into a WhatsApp group (experiment) of women sharing recipes. The

WhatsApp group then turned into this book, a culinary epistemological experience, in which eight mamans and Mimi created knowledge while cooking, mixing, eating and (digitally) exchanging.

Even if, in a patriarchal Western context, the kitchen is relegated to a room opposite the writing bureau, the epistemological value of cooking should come as no surprise. The sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, to whom I was introduced by Mimi, compares cooking to creating science. Through cooking, she has learned to think:<sup>2</sup>

*Yo cocino todos los días de mi vida y cocinando he aprendido a pensar, es curioso pero yo asocio mucho el rumiar ideas con el proceso cuando estoy cocinando.*

The sound of food being fried becomes a metaphor for the cooking of one's thoughts. Through food, moreover, you can taste history. For example, every year the Surinamese community in The Netherlands eats HêriHêri, a special starchy dish, to commemorate the end of slavery on July 1st.

Foodstuffs have travelled and crossed continents since time immemorial, allowing us to express ourselves and to connect with one another. Through cooking, we can learn about identities and hierarchies, but also about adaptability and what brings us together. Corn and cassava – so prominent in the Congolese daily diet, especially for making fufu na pondu – originated from the Americas, were domesticated in Central Africa, and travelled a long way before arriving to the kitchens of the mamans who present their favourite dishes here. The pages that follow will make your mouth water, but they are also an invitation to taste and participate in engaged science.

Catherina Wilson

Leiden, July 2, 2021

---

<sup>2</sup> Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia. 2018. Historias debidas VIII: Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Interview by Ana Cacopardo. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q6HfhZUGhc>. (accessed July 2, 2021)







# A letter to the PE Ladies

*Dear mamans,*

*This is your book. Each and every one of you, wonderful PE ladies, you are the master chefs here!*

*Every single page in this book offers a taste of the amazing knowledge of food you have. The details you know about using certain herbs and veggies; the way you prepare meat and fish; the knowledge of when to mix sweet with salty to bring out flavours from different places. From the Democratic Republic of Congo to Uganda, from Ghana to Cameroon, from South Africa and the world. This book is about your delicious food and how you enjoy it with your families and friends. So please, admire the following pages as the fruits of your own effort!*



*To create this book, you all spent time buying ingredients, cooking and sharing your recipes. But you also spent hours on WhatsApp, explaining and discussing how to create and shape this book. It was only through these conversations that such a project could have happened. It is a project that all of you developed and sustained as a space of dialogue where you could share your struggles, together with your hopes, your wishes and your enjoyment.*

*I feel deeply humbled and grateful to be part of such a space with all of you. From the day we met on March 2020, to the dinner you invited me to that Sunday after church, to the moment we continued our conversations online, you have always been kind and generous. You have trusted me with your knowledge, and even more, you have allowed me to bring it together, under your guidance, in this book.*

*I hope you find here a warm and faithful reflection of both yourselves as individuals, with unique tastes and preferences, and the PE ladies as a group of forced migrant women living in South Africa. I hope you enjoy this book as much as I have enjoyed working with you!*

*For all the joy, the laughter, the love... and the hope you gave me in the middle of the pandemic, I will always be grateful to my dear mamans.*

*From my soul and my heart: Thank you! Matondli! Wabare! Gracias!*

**With love, Mimi**







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# Introduction

by Mimi Ocadiz

The freshness of cassava leaves.

The texture of deep-fried dough.

The aroma of ginger and garlic spread over fish skin.

The heat of spices: cinnamon, black pepper, cardamom.

Are there enough adjectives, in any language, to describe just one bite of a meal cooked by a loved one? What words could contain all the sensations, emotions and memories that are at the heart of food that feeds the soul?

To enter the world of food is in many ways to enter the realm of stories. Stories about people, their families, their countries and cultures. Stories about people's past, their present and their futures. Food allows us to combine history, geography and politics, and even more, food can whisper those stories that are hidden on the lips of those who are often seen as voiceless. And if food can help us to uncover untold tales, what stories can be found in the recipes of forced migrants in Africa?



In this book, eight women (or, as they are respectfully called in some African societies, *mamans*) from Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), currently living in Gqeberha, South Africa, were invited to share recipes of their choice. This is the result of Food for Change<sup>3</sup>, a project where these women have worked together with myself, Mimi Ocadiz, from May 2020 to December 2021. The main goal was to engage with the stories of forced migrants during the pandemic. Using WhatsApp, the women shared cooking recipes of their choice and discussed how (and if) they would share the results. Based on these group conversations, the women expressed their desire to create a recipe book to save all their knowledge, primarily for other members of their communities, but also, potentially, for a broader audience in the future.

To honour their wishes, we've crafted this book together through an online dialogue where the women took the lead. And this is exactly what 'change' means here: the women deciding on the content, form and shape of this book. With myself, Mimi, as the co-curator, each and every *maman* had a say in the entire process of this project, from the title to the cover, from the images shared to the use of pseudonyms to protect their privacy.

*Loboko ya mama* is a co-created and co-authored book developed by African *mamans* as rightful, resourceful and resilient authors. These are *mamans* who, in the middle of the pandemic, and despite their very real problems, wish to share stories of warm textures, good smells, and delicious flavours. Stories of families and friends gathering around the table. Stories of enjoyment. Stories of food!



<sup>3</sup> See page 95





# How to use this book

Because *Loboko ya mama* prioritises the women's style to tell their stories and recipes, it is important to approach this book with an open mind. All recipes are presented as close as possible to how each *maman* narrated her way of cooking orally through WhatsApp. This means that most recipes do not contain exact measurements for the ingredients, nor strict cooking times, and different languages are used to describe particular ingredients. Throughout the book, some tips have been added where needed, and a glossary is included to translate key words. However, just like many artists, the women cook by relying on their five senses, their intuition, and a good sense of humour!

Thus, all the *mamans* are inviting the audience to dare, to try and explore (new) African ingredients, and to not be afraid to mess up your kitchen with unexpected flavours. After all, this book is less about perfection and more about trial and error. What matters most in a good meal, just like a good story, is how you enjoy it, and how you share your joy with others.





# Glossary

**Amagwinya** (Zulu) **or Vetkoek** (Afrikaans) - deep-fried doughnut (see page 77)

**Assaisonner** (French)– to season (see page 53)

**Biteku tekú** (Lingala) **or Légumes vertes** (French) – wild spinach (see page 41)

**Blanchir** (French) – blanching in English, a term that refers to a cooking method where vegetables are boiled and then immediately put into cold water. However, in this book the women use this word to describe a way of cooking vegetables without adding any water (see page 61)

**Brinjal** (Swahili) – eggplant / aubergine

**Cooking oil** – in this book, this refers to sunflower oil

**Egusi** (West Africa) **or Mbika flour** (Central Africa, Congo River region) - this is a flour made from the ground seeds of cucurbits plants, such as melons, pumpkin and squash (see page 63)

**Fumbwa or Mfumbwa** (Kikongo) – wild vine leaves (or simply vine leaves) that grow in parts of the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Angola and Gabon (see page 85)

**Fufu or Fufou** (Twi) **or Pap** (Afrikaans) – in Twi, this literally means ‘mash’ or ‘mix’, and refers to a kind of starchy vegetable mash made from cassava, corn or plantain (see page 31)

**Haricots** (French) **or Madesu** (Lingala)- beans

**Mabumu ya Ngombe** (Lingala) – beef tripe (see page 92)

**Maggi bouillon** – chicken or beef broth. The name comes from the brand, and the women mainly use the cubed or powdered versions

**Matembele** (Lingala) – sweet potato leaves (see page 75)

**Mbisi ya Kokauka** (Lingala) –  
smoked, dried fish

**Mikate** (Lingala) or **Berignets**  
(French)- a small deep-fried pastry  
(see page 47)

**Mpiodi or Thomson ya Kotumba**  
(Lingala) – grilled jack or horse  
mackerel fish (see page 83)

**Ndakala** (Lingala) – a small type  
of fish that lives in freshwater lakes  
in the central part of the African  
continent. These can be replaced  
with sardines (see page 55)

**Pulao** (word is of Turkish and Persian  
origin) – a type of rice dish cooked  
with meat and spices  
(see page 70)

**Pondu** – cassava leaves  
(see page 53)

**Soso ya Makasi** (Lingala) – this  
literally translates as ‘strong chicken’,  
which in English is better understood  
as hard chicken. This is a free-range,  
older type of chicken with a harder  
texture to the meat and less body fat.  
It has a deeper flavour, and requires a  
longer cooking time (see page 63)









[illegible]



# Pap or Foufou

Pap in South Africa, semoule congolaise or foufou in the DRC, foo-foo or fufu in West African countries like Ghana and Ivory Coast, xima in Mozambique, or ugali in Kenya. Pap is a common dish all across the African continent, and can even be found in the Caribbean and Latin America thanks to the diaspora. There are different variations and recipes, but in general it consists of mashed starchy vegetables such as yams, corn and cassava, either by themselves, combined with each other, or with other ingredients like plantain. In this book, the *mamans* cook two recipes: a thicker foufou made with yams, and the smooth South African version made with maize flour. Both versions can be enjoyed together with all the other recipes shared in this book!

## Yam Mama Sounamite Foufou

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 or 2 kilos of yam (there is also a similar version with cassava that you could try, but don't use sweet potato!)
- Butter or olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Water



**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Clean the yam and cut it into smaller pieces of about 4 or 5 centimetres, then peel it (use a cutting board to help with the peeling, because yam skin can be irritating to your hands). Place the yam pieces in a medium size cooking pot, cover them with about a litre of cold water and boil them on a high heat. Let it boil for about 25 minutes, until the yam gets soft. Take out the yam and set aside about a cup of the cooking water. Let the yam cool off, then add salt and pepper, oil or butter, and start to mash it! To speed up the process you can use a mechanical blender, but don't add any water – it should slowly become a thick, puree-like texture by itself.

Then, place it in a bowl and little by little add the cup of cooked water you kept aside. Beat the mix with a wooden spoon or by hand, until the mix becomes a smooth and elastic dough. If needed, add extra water to get the desired texture. You can shape the dough into small ball or ovals, and you're done!



# Quick yellow Pap

*Mama Petroni*

## INGREDIENTS:

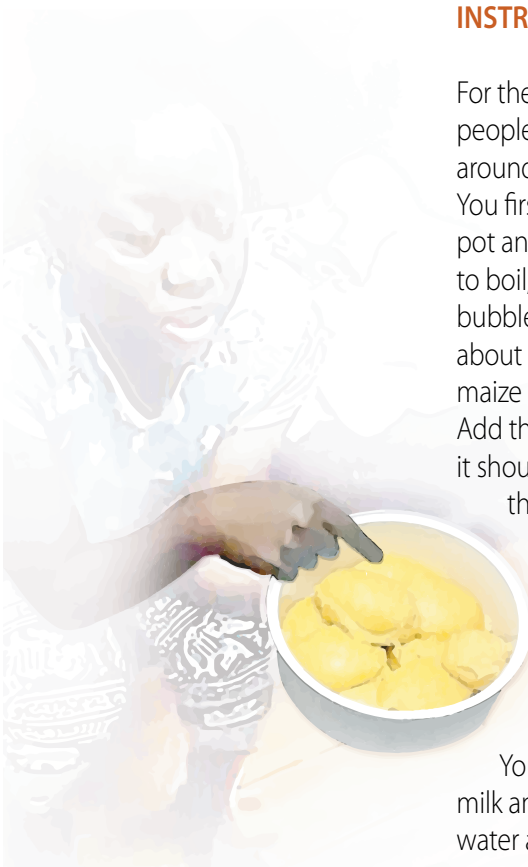
- About  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 cup of mealie meal or maize meal<sup>4</sup>
- Butter
- Salt
- Water

## INSTRUCTIONS:

For the pap, it depends on how many people will be eating – you need around one cup of water per person. You first put cold water in a cooking pot and heat it, then before it starts to boil, just when you see that some bubbles are starting to form, add about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup of mealie meal or maize meal for each cup of water.

Add the flour little by little, because it shouldn't be too heavy or dry, and then add the butter and salt. Stir it very well to mix everything until it starts to boil (this can take about 30 min). It should turn into a soft dough. Once the mix has the consistency of mashed potatoes, it's ready!

You can also enjoy this pap with milk and sugar or honey instead of water and salt.



<sup>4</sup> Mealie meal or maize meal is a thicker version of normal corn flour or cornstarch that is very common in countries like South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Maize meal was introduced by the Portuguese when they brought corn from the Americas, and is now a common product in the region because it is cheap and easy to store.





# PE Ladies







# Mama Nasser

Bonjour! I'm *maman* Nasser, and I'm a proud mother of one child. I arrived in South Africa 6 years ago and I'm one of the women in the Congolaise community. I'm living in Port Elizabeth and I'm a business woman who sells *congolaise* food. Since I was young, I was praying to be a brave woman and now I am how I wanted to be. Even if here in South Africa there are no jobs, I survive by selling food and working in the salon. Even if it's difficult, I know everything will work out for me.



# Fried Chicken with Rice

---



## INGREDIENTS:

- Chicken drumsticks and wings
- White rice
- Carrot
- Green peas
- Yellow pepper
- Fresh tomato
- Tomato paste
- Onion
- Salt and pepper
- Cooking oil

## INSTRUCTIONS:

In one pot I'm going to boil my white rice.

I just boil water, rice and salt for about 40 minutes until it's ready<sup>5</sup>.

In another pot I'm going to boil my chicken. Meanwhile I'm going to grate my carrot. When my rice is cooked and my chicken is also ready, I put them aside in separate bowls.

In a pot, I first sauté my onion until it's soft, then I add my grated carrot. When the veggies are golden brown.

I add my cooked rice and stir very well! In another pot I heat cooking oil and I add my onion, my fresh tomato, yellow pepper and tomato paste, then I season it with salt and black pepper. Once the mix is getting thick, I add my chicken and mix everything. Do not add water! Just cook the chicken with the tomato and veggies.

When the chicken is soft and well cooked, and my rice is nicely mixed with the carrot and onion, my food is ready!

*I like to cook this meal because my husband likes it too much, hehe!*



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<sup>5</sup> Remember that there are different types of rice and each one has a different cooking time, so just make sure you are using white rice and cook it as needed.

# Biteku Teku with Teku Beef and Pap

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## INGREDIENTS:

- Biteku tekku/ légumes verts
- Brinjal
- Onion
- Garlic
- 1 or 2 teaspoons baking soda
- Green pepper
- Maggi/stock (optional)
- Cooking oil

## INSTRUCTIONS:

I start by washing my légumes verts or biteku tekku and then I cut them. I don't cut it small, small, I cut it big, and after cutting my vegetables, I boil water and add baking soda.

I do not add a lot, I first see how many vegetables I have and then add one and half or two spoons... teaspoons of baking soda. When the water starts to boil, I add biteku tekku, and then you start to mix it and mix it. Once it becomes soft, you take it out of the water and you again wash your biteku tekku nicely and put it aside.



In a cooking pot, you put clean water on to boil. Meanwhile, cut your onion, garlic and green pepper. Cut the onion into big pieces! Add the veggies to the boiling water together with a bit of salt and cooking oil. Let it boil until everything is getting soft.

And once it's getting soft, I add other spices like Maggi and pepper. I then add my biteku tekku to it and let everything boil for 10 or 20 minutes. Once all my veggies are soft, I taste them to make sure it's nice!

For the meat, I like to cook it just like my mother! I first wash my beef nicely and then put it on to fry. Once the meat is cooked, I add chopped onion, green pepper, garlic and I start to mix with my spoon. I mix it, and mix it... until it all comes together and my veggies are soft. I then add some Maggi, the powdered one, and I mix it again and let it cook for another 15 minutes.

I keep it short because I don't want the veggies to release too much water.

I just want to fry the mix.

I like to eat my biteku tekku and my beef with fresh pap!











# Mama Sounamite

Hello everyone, my name is *la femme Sounamite*, I'm a Congolaise married to a camerounais man, I'm the mother of 2 handsome boys, and we live in Port Elisabeth. *La femme Sounamite*... she is a hard worker and an independent woman; she has a small business to make a living, but also has a national [Congolese] diploma in hospitality. She has also worked in sewing and as a caregiver, all just trying to make a living. All her life she liked to commit, everything with God's hand, and she also likes to socialize with other people. Thank you, I'm not going to forget my PE ladies for their efforts, love and focus! ♥



# Des Berignets Haricots

---



## INGREDIENTS:

*For the haricots*

- 1kg red beans (haricots)
- ½ kilo beef
- Tomato
- Onion
- Garlic
- Green pepper
- Black pepper
- Salt
- Cooking oil
- Maggi

*For the beignets or mikate*

- 750g all-purpose flour
- Sugar
- 2 cups of water
- Baker's yeast
- Eggs
- Salt
- Cooking oil

“Hello, hello! Today I’m going to cook beignet haricots, it’s a Cameroonian recipe. I’m Congolese, but my husband is from Cameroon. So this is the food they eat in Cameroon, but even in Congo we eat beans in the same way!”

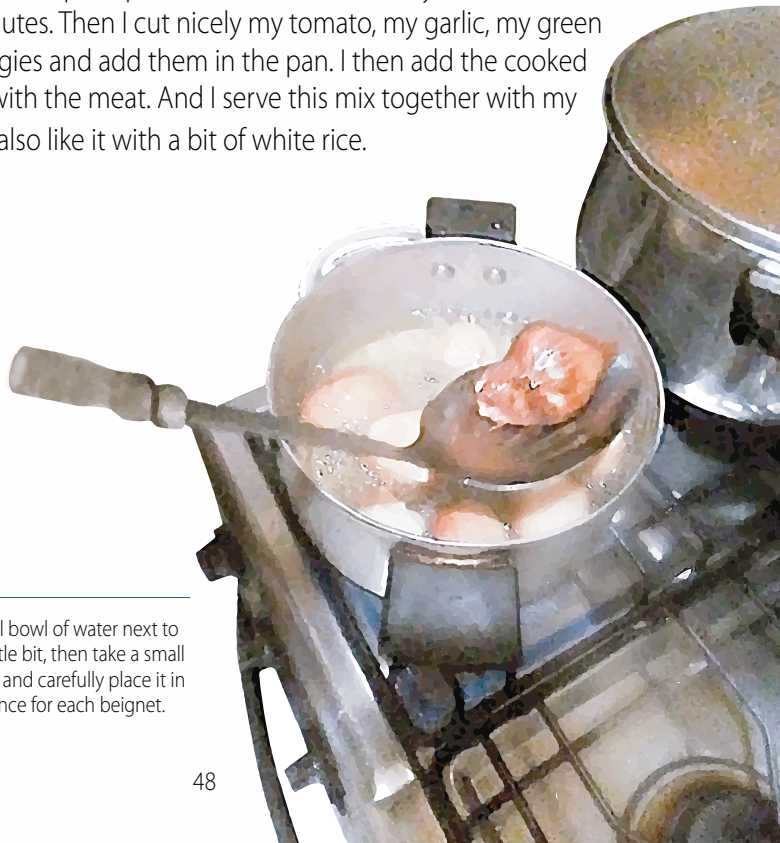
## INSTRUCTIONS:

First I have my haricots here and I’m going to boil them, and in another pot I’m going to fry my meat with just a bit of salt. Meanwhile I’m going to make my beignets or mikate. For that I put my flour, my sugar, salt and yeast in a large bowl, and I mix everything. I use my hands to beat the dough with energy! Strong! Until there are no lumps and the dough is soft and very flexible, almost liquid. I then cover my mix and I let it rest for 1 hour, until it grows to double its original size. I heat a lot of oil in a cooking pot and when it’s hot, I make small balls and put them in the oil<sup>6</sup>.

*Attention!* There should be enough oil for the dough to float! And be careful the oil is not too hot, or you will burn the *beignets*! Let each side brown for about 1 minute and then let them cool on absorbent paper.

For my haricots, in a hot pan I put some oil and I sauté my onion and salt for a couple of minutes. Then I cut nicely my tomato, my garlic, my green pepper, all the veggies and add them in the pan. I then add the cooked beans or haricots with the meat. And I serve this mix together with my fresh *mikate*, and I also like it with a bit of white rice.

<sup>6</sup> A good tip is to place a small bowl of water next to you and wet your fingers a little bit, then take a small amount of dough, roll it a bit, and carefully place it in the hot oil. Repeat this sequence for each beignet.



# Fried Fish with Rice and Pap



## INGREDIENTS:

- Red fish
- Green pepper
- Carrots
- Onion, rice
- Cooking oil
- Tomatoes
- Fried sausages

*To go with:*

- Sweetcorn
- Boiled potatoes

## INSTRUCTIONS:

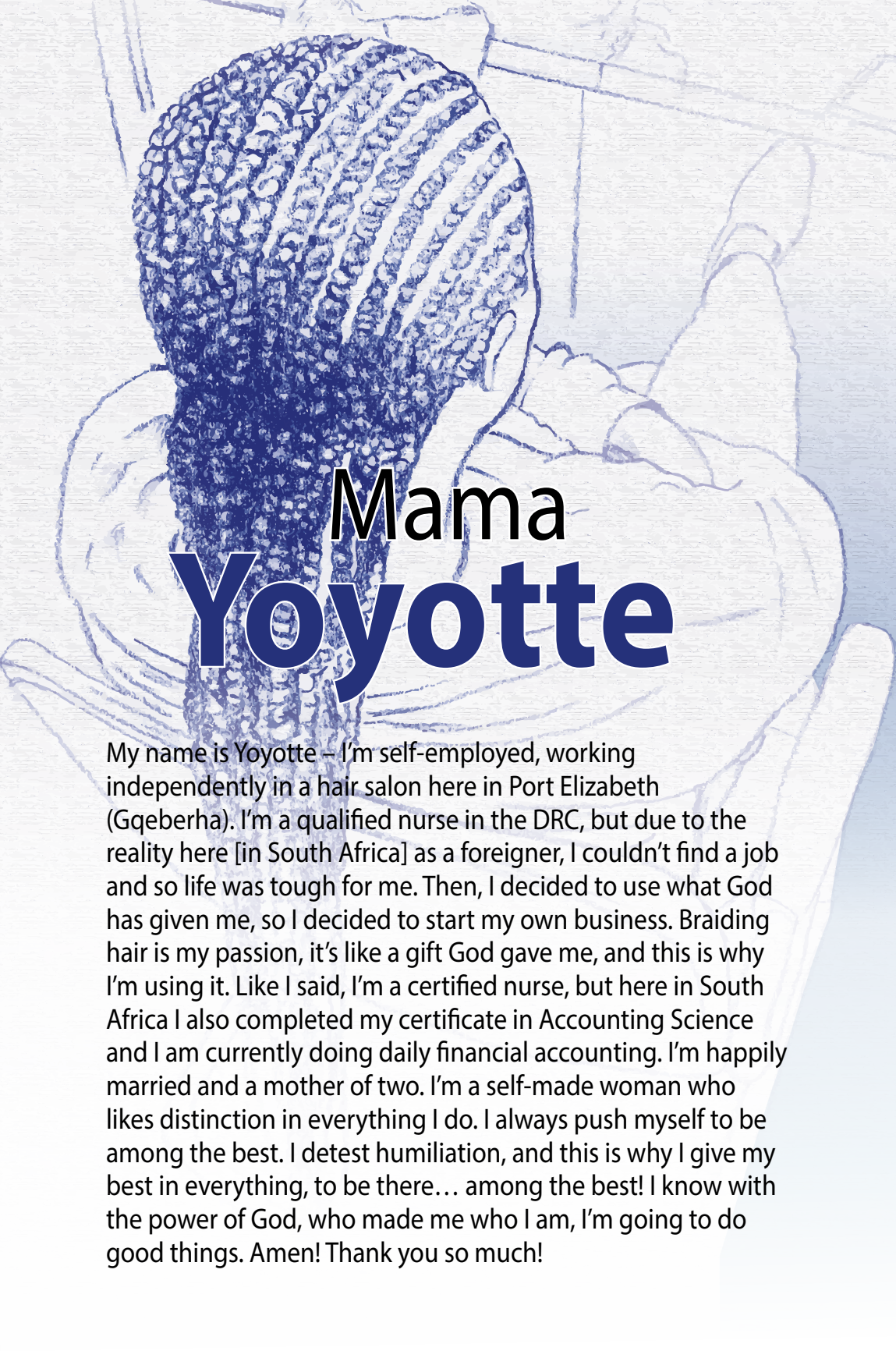
This is a very simple recipe I do for my family. I first wash my fish nicely, I heat my cooking pan and add my oil. I use enough oil to cover my fish! I then turn the fish until it's crunchy on both sides. In another pan I will cook my rice. This is very simple, it's just white rice with a bit of salt and boil it for about 40 minutes until it's ready. I like to add some soy sauce to it, but you can also keep it simple. When the fish is ready, I'm going to spice it, what in French we call *assaisonné*. So in a flat pan I'm going to sauté some onion, green pepper, carrots and tomatoes and mix them until they make a sort of thick sauce.

I like to put this mix on top of my fish and eat it with rice and pap.

Because I have small children, I usually cook some sausages with the fish and I also boil some sweetcorn.







# Mama Yoyotte

My name is Yoyotte – I'm self-employed, working independently in a hair salon here in Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha). I'm a qualified nurse in the DRC, but due to the reality here [in South Africa] as a foreigner, I couldn't find a job and so life was tough for me. Then, I decided to use what God has given me, so I decided to start my own business. Braiding hair is my passion, it's like a gift God gave me, and this is why I'm using it. Like I said, I'm a certified nurse, but here in South Africa I also completed my certificate in Accounting Science and I am currently doing daily financial accounting. I'm happily married and a mother of two. I'm a self-made woman who likes distinction in everything I do. I always push myself to be among the best. I detest humiliation, and this is why I give my best in everything, to be there... among the best! I know with the power of God, who made me who I am, I'm going to do good things. Amen! Thank you so much!



# Pondu Madesu

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"I love this recipe because it reminds me of mum, it was her favourite! I also chose it because the ingredients that I'm going to add, like the garlic and the ginger, are very potent to boost the immune system. In this crisis, we need to be healthy! Our immune system has to be strong! That's why in this recipe we are going to use all those ingredients, like ginger, like garlic, like onion. And our cassava leaves have a lot of iron. All those ingredients will help us to boost our immune system, that's also why I chose it during this period, to keep our bodies strong! Thank you and may God bless you in this hard time period!"

## INGREDIENTS

- Pondu- a bag of cassava leaves
- Two bags of dried beans (I use brown beans, but other types or beans are also fine)
- Onion
- Ginger and garlic (be generous with these two, they are very nice with pondu madesu!)
- Green pepper
- Spring onion
- Brinjal
- Cucumber
- Carrots
- 5 to 6 tablespoons of palm oil
- Salt



## INSTRUCTIONS

I'm going to start with my beans, clean them and put in a cooking pot with plenty of water for about one hour and a half to two hours – this depends on the beans you use. And for the quantity... it depends how many people are going to eat the meal.

Like me, in my family we are five people, so I will use two entire bags.

I boil them with just a bit of salt. In another pot I'm going to defrost<sup>7</sup> my pondu. Meanwhile I'm going to cut my other ingredients, my tomatoes, my cucumber, my ginger... all the vegetables and put them together in a blender. Once it's all mixed, add it to the pondu and boil them together until the smell<sup>8</sup> of raw cassava is gone. After that, check the beans are well cooked and put them together with the pondu, all in one pot.

In another pan, I'm going to fry my palm oil until it melts and the smell is gone. Be careful, palm oil can make you cough while you heat it hehe! I then add the oil to the pondu and stir the mixture. I let it cook for another 15 to 20 minutes. Then my food is going to be ready!

In my family, we like to eat pondu with fried chicken, rice and pap.



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<sup>7</sup> The original recipe used fresh cassava leaves, but in South Africa and in many other countries you can only find these frozen. To defrost, place the pondu (inside its plastic bag) in a pot with hot water and let it boil for 10 to 15 minutes. Once it's completely defrosted, carefully strain the pondu, removing the plastic. Place the defrosted pondu in a pot with clean water and carry on with the recipe.

<sup>8</sup> Ah! In English I cannot describe the smell of raw pondu, but what I can say is that you should leave it to boil for 1 1/2 to 2 hours, until the water is almost gone.

# Spinach with Ndakala

## INGREDIENTS:

- Spinach
- Brinjal
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Green pepper
- White and black pepper
- Maggi (powder or cubes, but not the sauce!)
- Onion
- Salt
- Tomatoes
- Cooking oil
- Ndakala<sup>9</sup>

## INSTRUCTIONS:

First, I'm going to soak my ndakala in water because it can have some sand, so I soak it in water and I clean it well. Meanwhile, I'm going to first wash my spinach and then I cut them small, small. Then, I put them in my cooking pot with some cooking oil on a low fire. I'm going to start stirring it until

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<sup>9</sup>Ndakala is a kind of dried anchovies from Congo that are very rich in flavor and omega-3. Because they may be hard to find, you can try using another type of dried anchovies or small dried fish for this recipe.

it starts to get soft. I don't want to put water because I don't want to change its colour, I want to keep it green. In French we call this *blanche*<sup>10</sup>, so I'm going to *blanche* my spinach, then I'm going to add my green pepper. While I'm stirring it, I'm also boiling my brinjal until they are soft, and then add them together with my spinach, add my onion, garlic and ginger. I'm going to stir it together and add a bit of water. Don't put a lot of water! Start small, small. And if you see you need more, you add a little bit of water and you leave it like that. Add salt and very little oil. Then I'm going to let it boil, until I see my onion, my green pepper... they are ready, they are soft. Then I'm going to add my Maggi and my white pepper and my black pepper.

When I'm finished cooking my veggies, I'm going to get a flat cooking pan. Put a bit of oil and add only onion and tomato. I'll cut them and fry them in oil, and after that I'm going to start to put my cleaned ndakala and start stirring it together. When I see everything is just fine, I can add... not salt, because if you add more salt it can taste too salty. You can add just a bit of Maggi and start stirring it until the smell of the tomato has gone away. And it's ready! It's so simple and quick!

Once I finish cooking my ndakala... because I have a child who is allergic to fish, I'm going to make chicken for her to eat. And my veggies and my fish I'm going to eat them with pap.

That's my recipe for today.



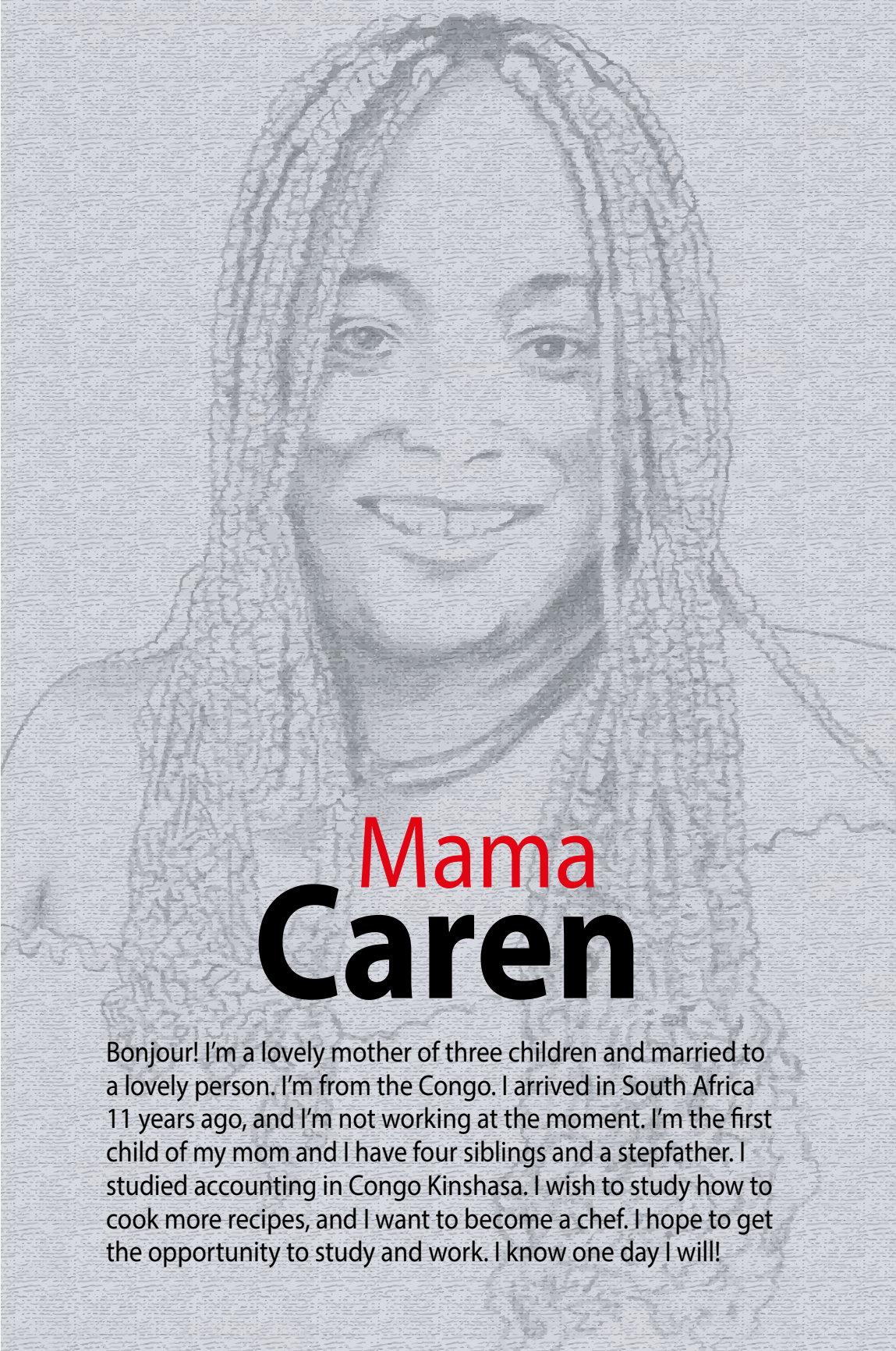
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<sup>10</sup> Here *blanche* means you don't add water, you just wash the spinach and start stirring it to make it softer, keep it green but make it soft, without boiling it. It should be green and soft at the end!









# Mama Caren

Bonjour! I'm a lovely mother of three children and married to a lovely person. I'm from the Congo. I arrived in South Africa 11 years ago, and I'm not working at the moment. I'm the first child of my mom and I have four siblings and a stepfather. I studied accounting in Congo Kinshasa. I wish to study how to cook more recipes, and I want to become a chef. I hope to get the opportunity to study and work. I know one day I will!



# Fried Rice

## (Ghanaian Style)

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"I learned this recipe from a dear friend! She is from Ghana and sometimes she cooked for me and my family. My children like the recipe so much I learned to cook it myself. My children love it, and I also like it very much!"

### INGREDIENTS:

- ½ kilo beef shin<sup>11</sup>
- 1 kg white rice<sup>12</sup>
- Onion
- Carrots
- Cabbage
- Tomato
- Green and yellow pepper
- Dried oregano
- Dried parsley
- Curcuma
- Black and white pepper
- Salt
- Cooking oil



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<sup>11</sup> In my family, we eat it with beef, but you can also use, chicken, pork or sausages and they are even better if they are a bit spicy! You can also mix different types of meat, just cook them first separately first.

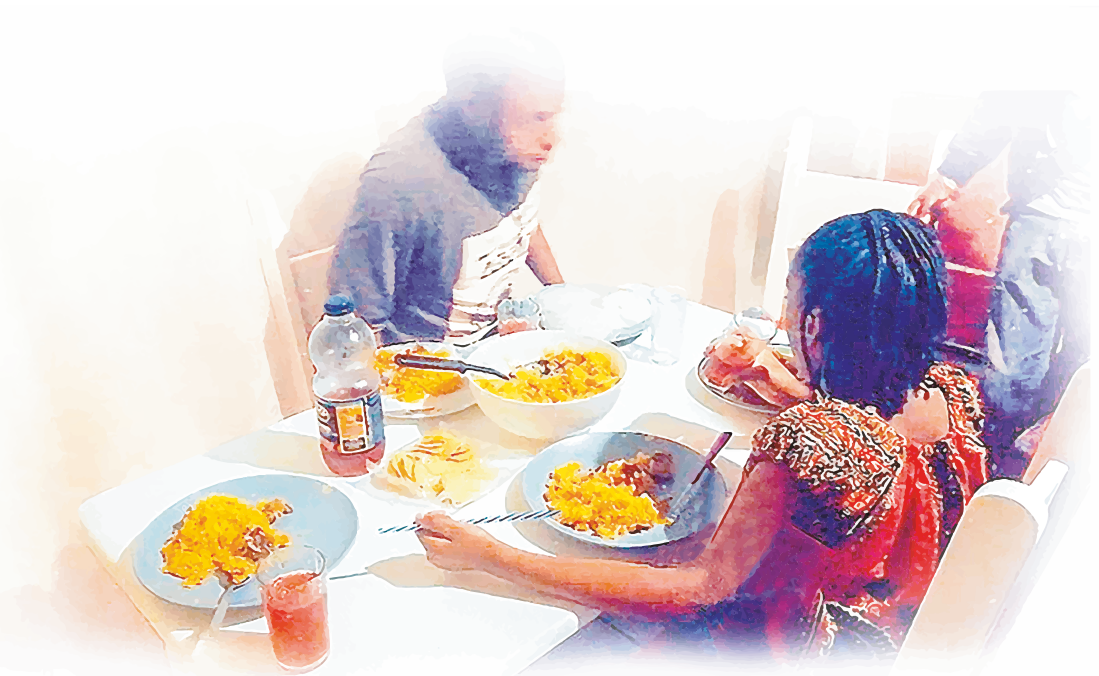
<sup>12</sup> I use plain white rice, but you can choose another one if you want to!

## INSTRUCTIONS:

I first cook my beef. I wash it nicely and I simply boil it with a bit of salt, chopped onions, white pepper, a bit of dried oregano, parsley and bay leaves. Let it boil for about 30 minutes until it's well cooked. Then I cut my beef into thin slices and I set it aside.

Next, I cut into small pieces my onion, my tomato, green pepper and carrots. I heat some cooking oil in my pan and I first sauté my onion, then I add rest of the veggies. Cook them well! They have to be golden brown! After that, I cut my cabbage into thin slices and I add it. I don't leave it too long because I don't want my cabbage to get too soft. I add my already cooked beef and my spices: turmeric, black and white pepper, salt, and I mix everything together. Then I put an entire kilo of white rice and I mix it with the beef and the veggies. I add a little bit of water, little by little, and a spoon or two of soy sauce. Lower the fire so the rice can cook slowly and it doesn't burn. I use my cooking spoon to mix it nicely. I let it cook for about 20 or 30 minutes, but this depends on the rice you use.

When the rice is soft, my food is ready!





# Soso ya Makasi

## Strong Chicken

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### INGREDIENTS:

- 1kg chicken drumsticks, wings and thighs with skin
- 1 cup Egusi (or MBika) flour<sup>13</sup>
- 1 onion
- Leek
- Garlic cloves
- Ginger powder
- 2 Maggi cubes (or chicken bouillon)
- Green pepper
- Fresh tomatoes
- Tomato paste
- Salt and pepper
- Cooking oil

### INSTRUCTIONS:

First I clean the chicken, then I put it in a big cooking pot and add a bit of salt. I then cut some onion, garlic, green pepper and leeks into thin pieces and I add them to my chicken. I pour water into my cooking pot, just enough to cover my chicken, and I add two cubes of Maggi powder, black pepper and ginger powder. I cover my pot and I let it boil for one and a half to two hours, stirring now and then. Once the meat is soft and there is not much water left, you know it is ready.

In another cooking pot, boil about one and a half cups of water and add the mbika flour. Let it boil, stirring it a bit, for 10 minutes until the mix gets thick, like a porridge. Set it aside.

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<sup>13</sup> Egusi or Mbika is ground flour from dried pumpkin seeds, used in this dish to give a thicker texture to the chicken

When the chicken is ready, I'm going to fry it! So, I take another flat pan and heat a lot of cooking oil (it should be enough to create a deep layer in the pan). Carefully, I start to place each piece of chicken in the pan and turn it until it's golden brown.

Be careful with the hot oil! And don't throw away the mix where you boil the chicken, with the veggies and the Maggi stock. When I finish frying my chicken, I put it back into the cooking pot where I boiled it and I add my mbika flour with water – this will add texture to my chicken.

For the sauce, I put my cooking oil in a flat pan and I sauté my onion, fresh tomato, and tomato paste (about two tablespoons is enough). I add a pinch of salt, black pepper and a little bit of Maggi to give it more flavour. Don't be afraid to try the sauce! If it's nice, just add it to the chicken and mix everything: the veggies, the sauce, the mbika... and let it cook on a low fire for a little bit, like for another 5 minutes, until it's ready!

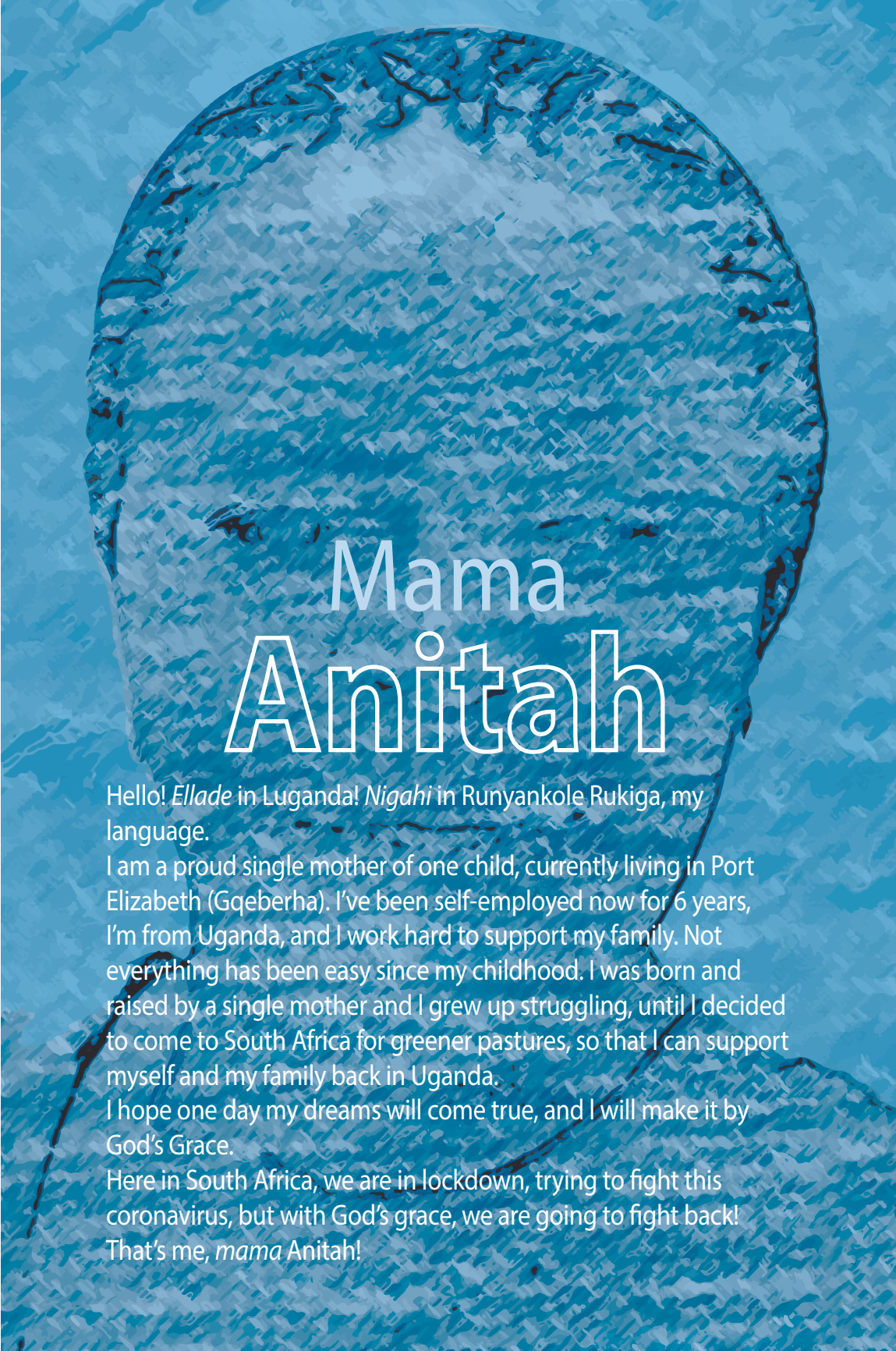
Me and my husband like to eat it with pap, but my children prefer it with white rice!











# Mama Anitah

Hello! *Ellade* in Luganda! *Nigahi* in Runyankole Rukiga, my language.

I am a proud single mother of one child, currently living in Port Elizabeth (Gqeberha). I've been self-employed now for 6 years, I'm from Uganda, and I work hard to support my family. Not everything has been easy since my childhood. I was born and raised by a single mother and I grew up struggling, until I decided to come to South Africa for greener pastures, so that I can support myself and my family back in Uganda.

I hope one day my dreams will come true, and I will make it by God's Grace.

Here in South Africa, we are in lockdown, trying to fight this coronavirus, but with God's grace, we are going to fight back! That's me, *mama* Anitah!



# Chapati

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"I personally like chapatti so much because I eat it with everything! I can eat in the morning with my breakfast, or serve it with any soup for lunch or dinner."

## INGREDIENTS:

- 3 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 cup of lukewarm water
- About 10 ml of cooking oil
- Half a grated carrot
- A quarter of an onion
- Salt



## INSTRUCTIONS:

I mix the flour with the lukewarm water until I make a flexible dough, then I let it rise for 10 to 20 minutes. I mix the carrot, the onion, and a pinch of salt into the dough. I make small balls with the dough (approximately the size of your palm). I place a little bit of flour on a flat surface and start to flatten the dough balls. You can use a wooden rolling pin, or you can also simply use your hands. I heat my frying pan with some cooking oil, not too much, and carefully I place my chapattis one by one. Be patient! Once one side has turned golden brown, flip it over. And you can enjoy chapattis with... everything!



# Pulao Rice with Lamb

"I love goat meat because I grow up with my grandma and grandfather; my grandpa used to prepare goat meat for us, but he didn't cook a soup, he always grilled the meat! But for this recipe you could also use beef or chicken if you want".

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 kg of basmati rice (if you cannot find basmati, you can use other types of white rice)
- 2 litres of water or beef broth
- Onion
- Cardamom
- Cinnamon
- Ginger
- Cloves
- Garlic
- Lamb steaks



## INSTRUCTIONS:

I start by adding some cooking oil in a pan until it heats, then I add my lamb or any other meat and let it cook for 30 minutes. Stir when needed. When it start to change its color to golden brown, I add my onion until it's well sautéed, then I add my spices too: cardamom, powdered ginger, cloves, and garlic. Remember that all spices should be ground! I then add raw rice and the water or broth and cover it with the lid. If you use only half kilo of rice, add just one liter of water. Let it cook for about 45 minutes.

I like to serve it with fresh green peas, beans, boiled spinach and pumpkin!









# Mama **Linda**

My name is Linda, I was born in February 1988 into a family of 8 children – 5 girls and 3 boys. I've been married to Mr. Junior since 2016, and I have one girl of 3 three years and one of 9 months. I'm from the Democratic Republic of Congo, but I live in South Africa with my husband and my daughters.





# Matembele with Red Fish

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"*Matembele* is a vegetable from my country, Congo, and it's one of my favorite foods. When we cook it here in South Africa, we have to add a lot of spices, because it's not really fresh from the farm. Here, they keep it long time in the fridge, so when we buy it, it's not fresh; that's why we have to mix it with onion and other spices."



## INGREDIENTS:

- Full red fish (with head and tail)
- Matembele<sup>14</sup>
- Carrots
- Onion
- Tomato
- Green pepper
- Tomato sauce
- Garlic and ginger paste
- Salt and pepper
- Cooking oil

## INSTRUCTIONS:

For the matembele, I first cut all my veggies into small pieces and I put my cooking oil into a pan. I'm going to fry first the onion, and after a couple of minutes, I add salt... not a lot of salt, but a little bit of salt... Then I'll mix it with my green pepper, carrots and tomato. So I fry all my vegetables together! When the veggies are ready, then I add my green matembele and I stir everything together.

Separately, I take away all the dirt from my fish. I clean it nicely! Then, I add some spices before I fry it.

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<sup>14</sup> Sweet potato leaves.

For that, I place my fish in a big bowl and I'm going to spread the ginger and garlic paste. But because I don't want the paste to burn, what I do is simply take about one tablespoon of paste and I squeeze the juice. I squeeze it well! Until the paste is almost dry! After the ginger and garlic juice, I also add some salt and white pepper and shake, shake my fish to spread the spices nicely! Remember that for the fish you have to put enough spices, because if you don't put enough, the fish is not going to taste nice. So, now I'm going to let my fish rest for 15 to 30 minutes before I fry it.

After this, I put quite a lot of cooking oil in a pan, and when the oil is hot, I add my fish and I let it cook for about 10 minutes on each side. I fry it for a total of 20 minutes, approximately. When my fish is almost ready, I'm going to add tomato paste to the matembele, a whole can of it! I stir everything and I let it cook for another 10 minutes. And then my food is ready!

Me and my family like to eat the fish and matembele with some chili peppers. We like chilies very much!



# Amagwinya and Chicken

## INGREDIENTS:

For Amagwinya<sup>15</sup>:

- All-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon dry yeast
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup of milk
- Cooking oil

*Ingredients for the chicken:*

- Chicken
- Tomato
- Yellow pepper
- Onion
- Ginger and garlic paste



<sup>15</sup> Amagwinya literally means 'thick cake' in Zulu. In the context of South Africa, it is related to Afrikaner cuisine, specifically to the oilebol, a Dutch deep fried dough similar to the bignets mentioned previously. Amagwinya is a popular dish in South Africa, as well as in other African countries like Zimbabwe, Botswana, Nigeria and Malawi, although it is known by other names and there are different variations.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

I like to start with my **amagwinya**. I first place the flour in a bowl, then I add the sugar, yeast and salt and I mix it all together. I make a small hole in the mix and add the milk and start to knead until you make a soft dough. If needed, add more milk so the dough gets flexible. Once the dough is nice, let it rest for 30 minutes. After that, beat the dough a little bit, and stretch it well. I stretch it, and stretch it again! Then, I let it rest for another hour and a half, until it's double its size. In a big pan, I heat a lot, really a lot of cooking oil! I make small balls with the dough, and carefully, I place them one by one in the oil, stirring it until they're all nicely brown.

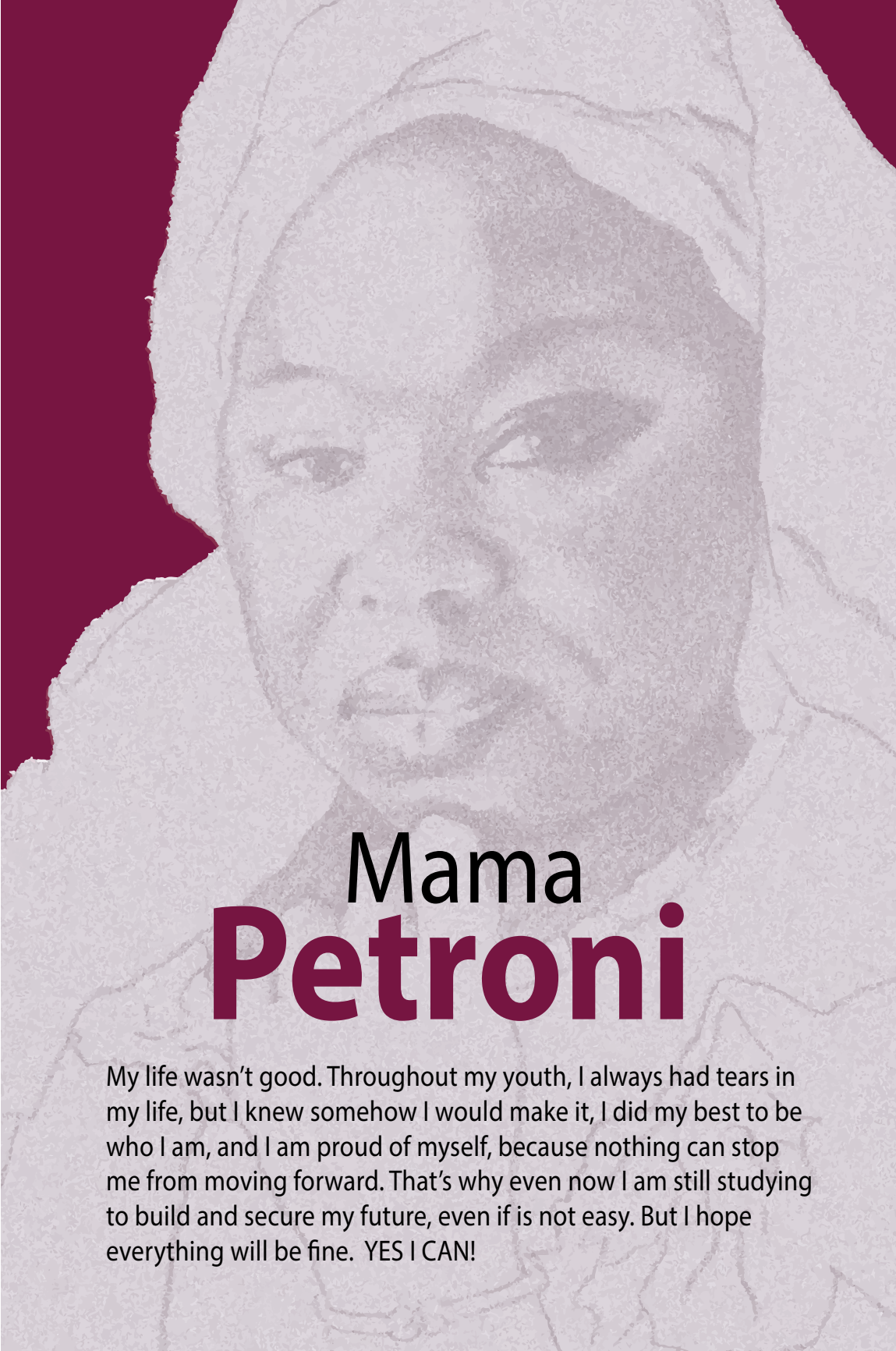
And the chicken is easy! I just sauté my onion first and then I add my chicken, ginger and garlic paste, salt and pepper. When the chicken is close to being cooked, I add my tomato, and my yellow pepper to make a kind of light sauce.

To make it healthier, in my place we eat it with a cabbage salad with cucumber, some boiled potatoes and butternut squash.









# Mama **Petroni**

My life wasn't good. Throughout my youth, I always had tears in my life, but I knew somehow I would make it, I did my best to be who I am, and I am proud of myself, because nothing can stop me from moving forward. That's why even now I am still studying to build and secure my future, even if is not easy. But I hope everything will be fine. YES I CAN!





# Mpiodi or Thomson ya Kotumba

## Grilled fish with potatoes, pumpkin and banana

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"Today is Saturday, so I want to cook something different. Today the recipe I choose to cook is fish!"

### INGREDIENTS:

- Thomson Fish
- Green pepper
- Spring onion
- Coriander
- Ginger and garlic spice
- White and black pepper
- Salt

And we are going to eat it with:

- Grey skinned pumpkin (other types of pumpkin are fine)
- Banana
- Potatoes

First clean the fish nicely with water, and then rub it all over with half a fresh lemon. Don't forget the insides! Then make some small cuts along the body of the fish and place some thin slices of lemon inside. Add some salt and leave it for 10 to 15 minutes. Meanwhile, mash together the onion, coriander and green pepper. You can use a mortar and pestle, I personally don't have this tool but you can always make do with whatever you have. So I'm using my platter and my kitchen hammer to squash my



ingredients. I'll also add a mix of ginger, garlic, black pepper and white pepper, and I spread this all over the fish. I'll just add cooking oil and mix it well then place the fish in aluminium foil, so it doesn't burn. I heat the oven to 180 degrees and leave it for a total of 20 minutes. Turn the fish after 10 minutes so both sides get nicely cooked.

And we are going to eat it with pumpkin, potato, and banana. First, let's steam the pumpkin. Pour water in the pot and then put some sort of steamer to protect the pumpkin, so it doesn't touch the water, and only the steam goes up. Once the water is boiling, leave it for 20 minutes.

For the potatoes, just wash them, cut them into slices (no need to peel them), add a bit of salt, pepper and a small amount of cooking oil. I put them in the oven for about 20 minutes. If you want, you can cook them together with the fish.

And for the banana, I usually use plantain, but because I cannot find it in South Africa, I replace it with green banana. This is actually dessert banana (the regular yellow, sweet banana you can find in most places) but it's not ready to eat, so it's still green. I'll cut it into slices and fry it with lots of cooking oil until the pieces are crunchy.

And your food is ready!



# Fumbwa

## Congolese wild spinach stew

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"Today I choose to cook food exactly like home. Today I'll cook fumbwa! Fumbwa is a vegetable that you cannot find anywhere here in South Africa, but it's common in Congo and some other African countries and you can only find it in the forest."

### INGREDIENTS:

- Fumbwa – wild spinach
- Peanut butter (make sure it's plain peanut butter without sugar, and not another type of peanut sauce with spices)
- Mbisi ya kokawuka (dried fish)
- Brinjal – aubergine/eggplant
- Onion
- Tomatoes
- Tomato paste
- Green and yellow pepper
- Spring onion
- Garlic and ginger
- Black and white pepper
- Salt
- Cooking oil



## INSTRUCTIONS:

First I clean my fumbwa leaves and I cook them in boiling water for 20 minutes. You don't need to add too much water, and of course not too little, just enough to cover the leaves. Meanwhile, you put the dried fish in another pot with hot water. Don't put it on the heat! You just need to make it soft so it's easier to take out all the bones. Once it's clean, add it to the pot with the fumbwa, together with slices of aubergine, tomato, green and yellow pepper, tomato paste and spring onion. Also add the spices: salt, black and white pepper, garlic and ginger. Gently mash the mix with a cooking spoon and let it boil for 15 minutes. It's going to look like you're cooking soup and not fumbwa, but to make it thicker you have to add peanut butter and stir it all together until you get a smooth mix. Peanut butter is going to change everything! It's going to make the fumbwa more like a curry than a soup. Let the peanut butter boil with the veggies for about 10 minutes, and it's ready!

I love to eat my fumbwa with yellow pap!









# Mama Leopoldine

I'm humble and welcoming. I'm the mother of 2 boys and I arrived in South Africa in April 2010. I'm a professional hairdresser with a constant ambition to learn new things. As we say, life is a fight, I'm trying my best to face my challenges with faith and a positive mind. I love doing my work, and I do it with passion. I'm also looking for more support to fulfill my expectations. I like to cooperate with others and my relatives, to persevere... Together we can!





# Okra with Chicken

"Hello *mamans*! Hello everyone! Today I'm going to cook okra. This vegetable is very nice because it has many properties. We use it in many countries, like Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya... in many places people eat okra because it's very nice! So let's cook okra with chicken."

## INGREDIENTS:

- Okra
- Chicken drumsticks and thigh with skin
- Fresh tomato
- Onion
- Red pepper
- Tomato paste
- Chicken stock



## INSTRUCTIONS:

I like to first cut all my veggies, my okra, my tomato, my pepper and my onion. I cut it all small, small. I heat some cooking oil in a pot and I fry my veggies, starting with the onion. I fry my onion nicely, until it's well sautéed! Then, I add my tomato, my pepper, and at the end my okra. Keep this mix aside.

For the chicken, I first wash it nicely and I like to keep the skin! Then I season my chicken with salt and pepper. I heat some oil in a flat pan and let the chicken fry for about 7 minutes on each side. All the chicken pieces should be golden brown and well cooked!

Then you can simply mix your okra with the chicken, and of course you can eat it with pap and/or white rice!

# Mabumu ya Taba

*Haricots blancs aux tripes / White beans with intestines*

## INGREDIENTS:

- About half a kilo cow intestine (*tripes*)
- 1kg white beans
- Fresh tomato
- Garlic
- Onion
- Spring onion
- Laurel leaves
- Paprika (any kind is fine)
- Fresh parsley
- Ginger
- Nutmeg
- Salt and white pepper
- Cooking oil

## INSTRUCTIONS:

I always start by cleaning the *tripes*. I first take off the thin layer of fat. The *tripes* have one side that is flat and the other has some texture; on the flat side, you can feel there is a transparent layer you can just pull away. I then cut my *tripes* into smaller pieces. Then, I wash them nicely with clean water. You have to clean them very well because they are very salty, so make sure to wash them at least twice! Once they are clean, put them in a cooking pot with boiling water and leave them for about 15 minutes. In another pot, I heat some cooking oil and carefully place each piece of tripe. Be careful with the hot oil! I then add a tablespoon of white pepper, some finely chopped garlic, parsley, and spring onions. I stir the mix, cover the pot, and I leave it to cook over a medium heat. I want to allow the *tripes* to be cooked in their own juice as much as possible, so I add just enough water to cover it when



the mix is too dry. I don't want my tripes to be grilled! When I add water, I also add some salt, I stir it a bit and I cover it again. Let it cook for about 20 to 25 minutes.

While my *tripes* are cooking, I take out any stones or dirt from my beans, and I wash them nicely! I put them in a cooking pot with clean water, some white pepper, salt, grated garlic (one or two cloves), and spring onion. I let my beans boil for about 40 minutes, making sure they have enough water so they don't burn. Then I just pour my tripes, including the juice they created, inside the pot with the beans. I add one or two laurel leaves and I let everything boil together for about 40 minutes to an hour.

In another pot, I'm going to make my sauce. For that, I heat some cooking oil and when it's hot, I add chopped onion, ginger, fresh tomato and some salt. I let it cook for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring it now and then. When the sauce is ready, I add the mix of beans and tripes, a little bit of water (about a third of a cup is enough), and nutmeg. I mix everything and I let it boil for another 15 minutes. Finally, I add some more fresh spring onion and parsley and I let it boil for a final 15 minutes. I check when my beans are soft and taste nice, then I know my food is ready!

Like most Congolese dishes, you can eat *les tripes* with white rice and/or pap!





# Food for Change





# The Roots of this Book: Food for Change

By Mimi Ocadiz



## *Personal encounters*

In March 2020, the news about COVID-19 was quickly reaching South Africa. At that time, I was spending my days at the Eastern Cape Refugee Centre (ECRC)<sup>16</sup>, visiting different refugee communities across the Nelson Mandela Bay. It was thanks to the centre that one morning I met a group of women from the DRC, who sat in a circle of plastic chairs, all facing towards me. As the room became full, I introduced myself: I told them my name, that I was working at the university, and that I was there to learn about their issues, and to consider, together, how to address them. In a mixture of Lingala, French and English, and

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<sup>16</sup> This center no longer exist and it has no further relations with this project.

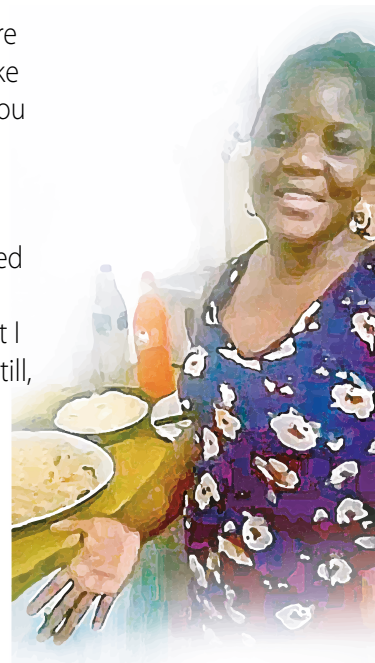
between shouts and laughter, the women talked among themselves, and then to me, to explain their struggles. These included their expired refugee status, issues accessing healthcare, difficulties finding a job, and police negligence. As the women described their difficulties, they also mentioned how they found alternatives, for example by creating their own jobs as hairdressers. They described their own organisation: M&Co, or *mamans* of Congo, which is a self-organised network of financial, emotional and spiritual support.

Then, after a long time talking, the women started to shift the conversation by asking me questions. "Where are you from?" "Are you a citizen here?" "Are you working or studying?" "Why are you here?" I answered that I'm a Mexican student in the Netherlands, who is trying to understand how the university can support them better, how I can support them somehow. Their answer was bittersweet:

"We appreciate your kindness; we can feel you mean it.... but... after you, someone else will come. It's not the first time, like I said, that someone has come. Even the things that are going on now, all those things we're talking about. Once they hear this they say, 'okay it's like that' mmm..." – she made a sound of disapproval – "you see, now if we call [our] people they are not going to come now because we are tired" (Mama Petroni).

I stopped hiding behind my researcher's notes, and I faced them openly, feeling both afraid and ashamed. I replied that I understood their tiredness and frustration, and that I was aware of my 'strange' position as a foreign student. Still, I dared to ask them if there was a way we could work together. They looked at each other, giggled a bit, and replied:

"You know.... I tell you the true he. We have many needs, but we can't tell you all our needs. But as a human being, you can say 'Okay I hear all these





*mamans'*, that is the first step. But we can't say 'do this and this for us'. You, yourself have to think 'okay, with my power I can only do this for you'. We are not going to say no" (Mama Petroni).

After a discussion on how to continue, they invited me to the next gathering of M&Co. We exchanged phone numbers, and shook hands; they asked me to keep my weekend free, and be sure to bring some food.

Next Sunday, they invited me to meet at their church downtown. I remember it was raining and windy, and the location was in a not-so-safe part of the city. So, there I was, in the middle of the street, feeling slightly confused and holding a tupperware full of homemade guacamole, when I heard Mama Nasser say: 'Mimi! Come Mimi!' She shouted at me with a smile. I ran towards her, and noticed there were only women and young children, all elegant and very well dressed (I felt very embarrassed of my casual clothes). As I entered the church, the women I had met last time came to greet me: 'Hi! Mimi!, Mimi is my new friend!, Mimi, good to see you! ...'. On the left side there was a long white table of food, so I placed my guacamole there and Mama Petroni hugged me and thanked me for bringing my own dish. She offered me a seat on the left side of a circle of chairs where all the women sat, and before long they held their habitual meeting in Lingala.

After just 15 minutes, they called one of the women to the centre. She was tall and beautiful and carried a small baby wrapped in a blue, soft blanket. A very sweet baby boy. The core of this entire evening was to celebrate the arrival of this new baby into the community. In the background, music in Lingala was playing the whole time, but as the baby was shown, the volume of the music increased. Only then did I understand that it was actually a celebration! – and it was time for dinner! There was so much food! There was a red stew with beef, grilled chicken legs, two different stews made from cassava leaves, baked potatoes, and small, fried pieces of dough. I tasted then the recipes presented in this book. There was also rice with meat and vegetables, an amazing spicy sauce, some bread, chicken and paprika brochettes, and my guacamole with totopos. The women sang and danced, and the children in the back seemed to have a lot of fun, chasing each other. I had a first serving of food, then a second, and a third! I was so full, but the red spicy sauce was so good! I enjoyed mixing it with the fried dough, which created a delicious combination of sweet and spicy. As I talked and laughed together with the women, I enjoyed each bite.

Late in the evening, I arrived back to my room with a light heart and a full belly. I honestly enjoyed being part of that dinner and just eating and listening to all the *mamans* and their children. I found it so sweet and warm that for a moment, I felt the sort of happiness I feel when I'm at home. With a still full belly, I went to bed happy and inspired, dreaming of what to do next...

The very next morning, after that peaceful evening at the church, I received the news that South Africa had declared a state of disaster due to the spread of the new coronavirus. And so, still energised by the fibre and protein of the women's food, I had to leave the country. I only got the chance to inform the women of my departure via WhatsApp, and the goodbye felt tasteless. It was then that I decided to share with them the recipe for my guacamole, as my own way of saying 'Dear ladies... I'm thinking of you all!'

### *Engaged Scholarship*

Little did I know then that the creamy texture of avocado and the spark of lemon juice could mix so well with Scholarship for Change<sup>17</sup>, an initiative by my research team at the Vrije University Amsterdam to listen to the experiences of forced migrants during the first stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. That blend of a Sunday dinner after church and my team's wishes to remain engaged with forced migrant communities lead to Food for Change.

Food for Change is a project where the eight *mamans* that I met in Gqeberha shared their cooking recipes online. The project emerged in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 with two main objectives: a) to focus on a problem that the women found important at that moment; and b) to work as closely as possible with the women at every step of the



<sup>17</sup> Scholarship for Change was an expression of solidarity with forced migrant communities in the Netherlands, the USA and South Africa. This initiative is part of the larger project Engaged Scholarship Narratives of Change, headed by Professor Halleh Ghorashi and based at the Vrije University in the Netherlands. For more information, please visit: <https://engagedscholarshipnarrativesofchange.org/>

project so that their wishes were a priority at all times. Using these guidelines, we decided to address a major concern for many forced migrants in times of crisis: putting food on the table on a daily basis. By focusing on food, the project departed from the idea that cooking is not just a daily duty; in the kitchen, the women also bring what they know about different ingredients and recipes into practice, adding their creativity, breaking some rules, and trying new flavours. In this way, cooking and sharing food can also be a pleasant activity full of playfulness and enjoyment.

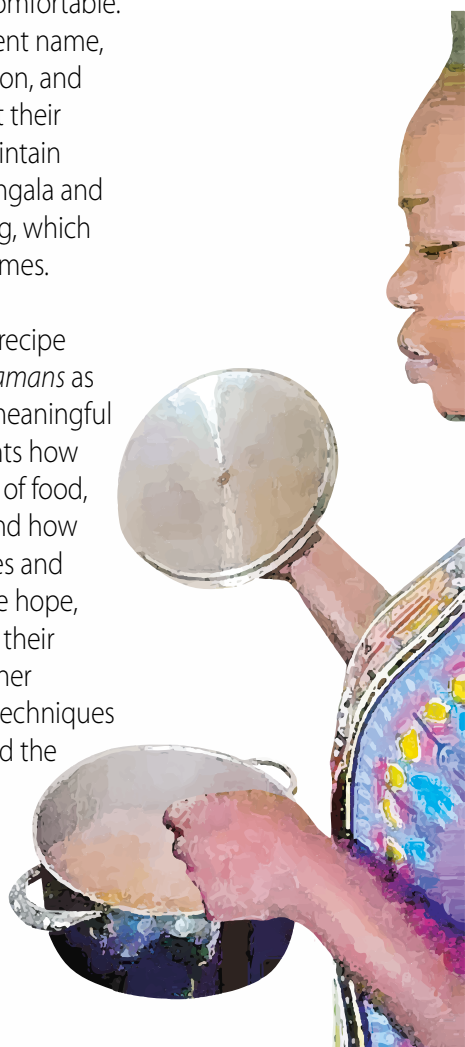
In addition, this recipe book also features the experiences of the women in relation to COVID-19 for example, how certain dishes are selected because they remind them of people they could not see at the time (like the Pondou of mama Yoyotte in page 53, or the Pulao from mama Anitah in page 70). However, while the difficulties of migrants are all too real and relevant, Food for Change was not about reproducing or emphasising the problems in the women's lives. Instead, we wanted to focus on different stories. Stories of warm textures, colourful dishes and good smells. Stories where the women could take steps towards enjoyment and care in the kitchen, and share them with their loved ones in a time of pandemic.

### *The process of co-curation and co-creation*

In practice, the project consisted of three rounds of recipe exchanges where the women used photos, audio, texts and voice memos to show the ingredients, how they cook, and how they share and enjoy meals with their loved ones. The exchange was followed by a group discussion on the positive and negative sides of the collaboration, alongside personal conversations with each participant. Throughout the final discussions, participants expressed their desire to preserve and share their recipes within their community, as well as with a broader audience. We therefore agreed that together, we would co-create and co-curate the book you have in your hands right now!

Just as food and stories are enriched by diverse ingredients and words, what makes *Loboko ya mama* special is the dialogue between different voices. Instead of a single author/cook, this book has been crafted through a close collaboration with and among eight *mamans* from the DRC and Uganda, as well as myself (Mimi), to curate their culinary knowledge and present it in this book on their own terms. This is why, relying on WhatsApp at all times due to COVID-19 measures, I asked each woman to describe herself and present two recipes of her choice. Once we had over thirty delicious recipes, the women were also involved in the design process of the recipe book, and were invited to select the photos, colours and frames that fit their preferences in order to create a visual portrait in which the women could see themselves reflected, in a way that they felt comfortable. For this reason, all of the women selected a different name, their photos have been edited with their permission, and personal information has been avoided to respect their privacy. In addition, we have done our best to maintain their playful use of different languages, such as Lingala and French, as well as their intuitive manner of cooking, which does not use precise measurements or cooking times.

By stepping out of the more traditional format of recipe books, *Loboko ya mama* presents eight African *mamans* as rightful, resourceful and resilient contributors of meaningful stories in a time of pandemic. This book documents how much they know about the nutritional properties of food, how they can adapt recipes in times of scarcity, and how they use food to express their love for their families and friends. It also follows the women's goals to inspire hope, by demonstrating how they use knowledge from their home countries, acquire new knowledge from other African cuisines, and adapt local ingredients and techniques to create meals that unite their households around the pleasure of eating 'just like home'.







# Collaborators and Acknowledgements

Together with the eight *mamas*, this book involved the collaboration of the following people.

## Doctor Catherina Wilson



My name is Catherina Wilson. I am a woman, a fighter, a mother, a sister, a curious person, a friend. My parents come from different continents, so I am half-half, mixed, never fully at home in one country, but able to adapt and fit in to many places. I have moved around a lot in my life. I like to learn languages and speak them aloud, even if I make mistakes. My mother calls me a chameleon. I enjoy colour, light, travelling and (the smell of) food. After studying high school on three different continents and in three different languages, I decided to enrol in African Studies at university, mainly to shock others, but also because I had fallen in love with the continent. This decision was only the beginning of a long learning path across countries, a journey that changed my life; it turned me into a mother, a listener. It is a journey that will never come to an end. Throughout my bachelor, master and PhD I became an interdisciplinary (chameleon) scholar linked to linguistics, anthropology, and history, yet never fully part of any discipline. Mobility was not only my nature but also became my subject of study. I consider being a researcher not something one does, but rather a state of mind, a way of life, something one is. Through research I was able to connect travelling and curiosity with meaning. Researching is much more than collecting and analysing data, it is a chain of meaningful encounters. This is why I consider reflecting on our changing role as researchers very

important. I like to believe academia is changing to be more inclusive of the knowledge production that takes place outside university by non-academic others. In my eyes, researchers need to stand side by side with these knowledge creators in order to get involved, together, in creative, engaged, critical and social practices. It is in this sense that I consider a transnational recipe book to be an academic output, and I am happy to be a part, even on the sidelines, of the process.

**Andy Redwood**  
**English Proof Reader**



My name is Andy, and I had the good fortune of proofreading this book. When I'm not walking the hills near Barcelona with our dog, I spend my days proofreading and animating videos about climate change. I'm a traveller at heart, but am now happily settled in Barcelona with my wife Lucilla, our three cats and dog Ella. It was a real privilege to work on this book – I hope you enjoy reading and trying out these recipes as much as I did!

**Victor Ocadiz**  
**Graphic designer**



I'm Victor Ocadiz, a graphic communicator who graduated from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and have more 40 years of experience. I'm also the father of Mimi. Through decades of work, I've been lucky enough to be involved in a variety of engaging projects. A major example was the creation of different visual materials, such as flyers and posters, in 53 different indigenous languages of Mexico with the aim of spreading information about electoral crimes. Another experience very close to my heart was my role as an art therapist in the Clínica Nezahualcóyotl,



a multidisciplinary institution from the UNAM. Located in a marginalized area of Mexico City with high rates of violence, I had the chance to collaborate with families from the community in a grassroots project. At the same time, I was glad to give something back to my alma mater the UNAM, a wonderful public university that has offered myself and my family great opportunities. And of course, I'm happy to be a part of this book! I've enjoyed reading about the relationship between Mimi and the PE Ladies and how the women show their resilience during times of COVID-19. On a personal note, I would like to add that I had a childhood with many economic and social constraints, and I know from my own experience that love and support from family and friends is fundamental to facing life's challenges. I'm grateful to have been a part of the team behind this book!

**Mimi Ocadiz**  
**Curator and facilitator**



Hola! I am Miriam (Mimi to my friends). I am a sister, daughter, auntie and loyal friend born and raised in Mexico City and currently based in Portugal and the Netherlands. Since my childhood I have always loved listening and connecting stories. When I was 20, I moved abroad to study a bachelor's in International Studies where I specialised in a region that is barely known in my home country: Africa. Through a minor in African Culture and Politics, and a Research Master in African Studies, I became deeply passionate about stories of people who move within and across the Global South, and how their voices can contribute to decolonisation. By regarding the African continent as a departure point, I have had the privilege and honour to collaborate with Cuban doctors and Brazilian students in Mozambique, and now with different African migrants in South Africa. As a PhD candidate within the project Engaged Scholarship Narratives of Change, I hope to

listen to, support and interact with forced migrant communities in South Africa in order to contribute to the values and goals they find meaningful.

### Engaged Scholarship Narratives of Change



The Engaged scholarship and narratives of change in comparative perspective project, headed by Professor Halleh Ghorashi, investigates the co-operation between academics and society -termed “engaged scholarship”- within three contexts: South Africa, the United States, and the Netherlands. Engaged scholarship refers to transformative and critical forms of academic work that have the ambition and capacity to stimulate reflection in order to enable more inclusive practices in society and academia. This project aims at a more comprehensive and transformative understanding of how engaged scholarship can contribute to the societal inclusion of refugees, arguably the most urgent challenge of this decade. Its underlying assumption is that the social sciences play an important role in enlarging societal and academic imaginations by connecting local, historical, and analytical knowledge to enable a true inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

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