



A colourful dish of Brown Butter Apples, Cinnamon Berries, Custard & Rhubarb from the West African-inspired cookbook, *Ikoyi: A Journey Through Bold Heat*, published by Phaidon

A TASTE OF WEST AFRICA

The latest global obsession in restaurants and home kitchens taps into the bold and vibrant flavours of West Africa, specifically those from Nigeria. According to Google Trends, the search for Nigerian foods was up 400 per cent since 2022, and the interest has gone mainstream, even making a cameo on *Ted Lasso*. (There, endearing midfielder Sam Obisanya opens a Nigerian restaurant named after his father.)

The appeal comes as no surprise: Beyond the punchy injection of herbs and aromatic spices like fragrant *ehuru* (calabash nutmeg) and an incredible variety of peppercorns (Cameroon, Ashanti and Alligator), the cuisine is predominantly plant-based at a time when the world is trying to eat more sustainably. There's peanut stew, *suya* (smoked spiced meat skewers) and classic *fufu* (pounded cassava), but it's *jollof* rice – with its intoxicating aroma, spicy flavour and deep-red colour – that's taken over most menus.

At *Ikoyi* in London, Canadian Chinese British chef Jeremy Chan marries organic produce from the British Isles with the spices of West Africa to create original, flavour-driven dishes. He serves *jollof* rice smoked and, depending on the season, topped with crab custard. (The restaurant has garnered two Michelin stars and shot up to 35 on *The World's 50 Best Restaurants* list in 2023.) In Canada, an increasing number of Nigerian restaurants have opened, with modern interpretations of the savoury tomato-and-pepper-stained dish on offer at Afrobeat Kitchen and Blessinglicious in the GTA, Arike in Vancouver and Franyz Kitchen in Middle Sackville, N.S. —Renée Suen



BLUE STREAK

Today's decor world is awash in a palette inspired by the sky and sea. The latest brand to dive into the great blue beyond: Le Creuset. The premium cookware company's new Agave hue takes its cue from both the ocean and the jewel tones of the blue agave plant, that large succulent famous for enabling tequila production. Deep, dark and elegant, this new blue is a natural match for today's all-white kitchens, as well as trendy ones that pair grey and aquatic cabinetry with a range of wood grains. For Le Creuset diehards, this blue is a knockout mixed with the brand's softer Chambray and neutral Meringue tints. For a more land-and-sea countertop approach, match Agave cookware, tableware and accessories with Le Creuset's deep-green Artichaut and soft Sage hues. However you do blue, the new hue allows you to indulge, whether with an iconic French press, classic Dutch oven or basic butter dish. —Deborah Fulsang

PUNCH IT UP

Christina Veira, the internationally acclaimed cocktail expert and co-owner of Bar Mordecai in Toronto, enthuses about colour and flavour. "I'm a big fan of large-format cocktails, especially punch," she says. "They're full-flavoured ... you want to start with a bang." One of her go-to recipes is Mother's Ruin from the American craft cocktail bar Death & Company. "The overall recipe is very simple to pull together before a party," Veira says. "Gin, sweet vermouth, grapefruit, lime, soda, sparkling wine: It's an easy-to-build crowd-pleaser." Opt for a gorgeous punch bowl and glasses to add to the atmosphere. They'll jazz up your hosting setup instantly. Especially if you do it Veira's way, with a big block of ice, a few citrus wheels and a sprinkling of edible flowers in the bowl. —DF

