

# Ghana Food Movement's Promotion of Underutilized and Disappearing Culinary Ingredients - A Dawadawa Jollof Recipe

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## **Chef Abiro, Ghana Food Movement**



Wisdom Abiro is a young chef from Bolgatanga, Ghana who graduated from Accra Technical University with a high national diploma in Hotel Catering and Institutional Management where he took the lead in his class. Now, he is dedicated to promoting food from northern Ghana and does this in his kitchen/restaurant and on screen. Support his efforts by following him here, [https://www.instagram.com/chef\\_abiro/](https://www.instagram.com/chef_abiro/). Much of his dedicated promotion of northern food is through one of Ghana's largest food networks, the Ghana Food Movement.

He is a major part of the Ghana Food Movement (GFM) which launched in 2019 in Accra by Ghanaian and international food actors including chefs, entrepreneurs, farmers, nutritionists, journalists and food activists who were determined to work towards a stronger local food system. Our mission is to be a home for innovation and change makers creating a thriving food system in Ghana and West Africa.



# Ghana Food Movement



GFM performs food activism by uniting diverse actors under the core values of sustainability, youth inclusion and food sovereignty. We are up against international food industry giants that have built monopolies that put profit before producers- and consumers rights. Leading to decreased quality of food, decreased diversity of diets, monocropping, biodiversity loss, waste and emissions. As well as politicians that enable these activities and fail to think about the future. We, therefore, need a strong common voice to advocate for sustainable food production, producers' rights to fair incomes and consumers' rights to nutritious and culturally appropriate food.



In our Ghanaian context, food sovereignty is closely linked to food independence. Currently, foreign agendas, unfair trade policies and profit set the term for what is eaten, where and how it is produced. This power must be distributed evenly, to producers, local manufacturers and consumers and this will be possible when Ghana is food self-sufficient and can feed its own people. Our vision is a self-sufficient Ghanaian food system that provides jobs, boosts local economies and enables access to nutritious local food while protecting ecosystems and biodiversity.

To achieve our mission and vision we provide access to a diverse network and opportunities in the food space, curate immersive food experiences, design youth focussed capacity building programs and offer consultancy on sustainability, youth engagement and food innovation, which are all in alignment with our core values.

# Our Activities

Currently, we organize four regular activities.

The **members meetup** is a casual get-together for our members. Our membership is for people who want direct access to our community of food changemakers and want to contribute to our work. The member meetup happens every other month in Accra and is a great way for people to connect, ideate and build partnerships.

**The Movers Connect** events are informational events on food system with experts. We invite industry professionals, consumers and school groups, a great forum for networking and conversation. Past topics include neglected and underutilized species, local food entrepreneurship and seeds.

**Dine and Dance** is a dining experience where chefs reimagine underutilized food crops in a 3 course dinner, followed by music and dancing. The experience is aimed to showcase the diversity of Ghanaian ingredients and prove that they can be enjoyed in modern formats.

Our **Food tours** are unique in Ghana and are excursions that immerse participants in the food value chain and deep dive into Ghana's food culture by following one crop from farm to table. The tours include visiting farms, discovering indigenous ingredients, traditional and new cuisine, meeting farmers, communities, entrepreneurs, chefs, soaking up their ancient knowledge and modern stories.

Beyond this we also initiate and organize bigger programs, projects and campaigns.

The **Youth in Food Program** that connects Ghanaian university graduates to jobs in the food sector. The program the participants get access to training in employability skills, personal mentoring, field trips and finally a 5-month long internship with a company.

Our latest project is the **Link Up Kitchen**, an innovation kitchen, event space in Accra that will serve as a knowledge hub and incubator space for culinary knowledge preservation and business innovation.

The **Buy Ghana Build Ghana** campaign has engaged consumers through social media and we challenged them to eat 100% Made in Ghana products for 7 days. We are building Ghana's biggest directory of locally sourced produce and manufactured foods.





# About Jollof

Few culinary dishes globally represent West African cuisine more than Jollof Rice. From the countless videos that feature 'jollof wars' between diverse peoples and countries on who prepares the tastiest Jollof, this staple dish is positioned as a Pan-African phenomenon that unifies the region in their pride for delicious cuisine. These narratives counter the domineering rhetoric of the region as persistently hungry, poor and devoid of food.

Jollof Rice is a one-pot, spicy, steamed rice dish prepared in a tomato-based sauce that can take anywhere between 60 minutes to an entire afternoon to cook. It is typically served with stewed meats like beef, or lamb kebabs, as well as coleslaw or salad, but there are many regional variations. You often find Jollof Rice at many West African celebrations, festivities and events like weddings, birthday parties and in most diaspora restaurants. Jollof rice is even served on British Airways flights to and from the continent and there is a special day marketed to serving Jollof Rice (August 22), which was introduced by social media over the past five years and then reportedly popularized by culinary brands like Maggi.



Originating by the Wolof/Jollof/Djolof peoples of the Senegambia area of Senegal, Jollof Rice reportedly stems back to 1860-1940 when Europeans colonized much of West Africa and they also brought culinary recipes and ingredients using broken rice and tomatoes from other places used to prepare a dish resembling jollof, which was then adapted to what we now know as Jollof Rice.

Colonies promoted foreign rice consumption across West Africa and traders or merchants (likely by the Dyula-a nomadic, Mande-speaking trading group) brought the ingredients across the region. Unesco put the Senegalese version of jollof rice on the heritage humanity list in 2021.

# About Jollof and Dawadawa



According to the Canadian-African Afia Amoako, Jollof Rice recipes have major variations across the region based on the type of variety of rice used, how the sauce/stew is made and the extent to which vegetables are included, how and whether it is prepared using one-pot with everything cooked together or not <https://thecanadianafrican.com/who-has-the-best-jollof-in-west-africa/>. The Senegalese version, for example, includes a lot of fish and a diverse set of vegetables, whereas Ghanaian Jollof generally has a more variety of spices and meat. Long grain, jasmine rice is typical to the Ghanaian version of Jollof.

Dawadawa is what makes the following recipe unique to northern Ghana but which is also served in other places. Dawadawa is the Hausa name for the fermented African locust bean tree seeds. It is infamous for how strong it smells and tastes, and can transform any recipe. The seeds are fermented for multiple days in a laborious process which gives it a strong sour, musky, umami odour and flavour with some hints of cocoa, while also resembling a stinky cheese and which allows it to store without refrigeration.

This recipe is also gluten-free and vegan, which according to Chef Abiro is also a popular cooking style unique to northern Ghana rice dishes which feature meats and other vegetables on the side as opposed to mixed or cooked within.

**An Action Research Partnership** <https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/projects/feedingcity>

The Feeding City Lab is working in partnership with the Ghana Food Movement to co-produce knowledge together and mobilize it through different mediums to connect and amplify local food sovereignty initiatives globally. This is part of our wider scholarly efforts to support community initiatives through knowledge translation, such as the podcast series Voices from the Food Frontlines- Pandemic and Beyond, as well as several capacity-building workshops, photo essays and much more.



<https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/projects/feedingcity/food-frontline-voices/>

Read more in this book here: <https://senegal.harmattan.fr/index.asp?navig=catalogue&obj=livre&no=72081>  
or an English summary here: <https://theconversation.com/who-invented-jollof-rice-senegal-beats-ghana-and-nigeria-to-the-title-197352>

Also a useful post here: <https://thecanadianafrican.com/who-has-the-best-jollof-in-west-africa/>





## Chef Abiro's Quick Dawadawa Jollof Rice Recipe

SERVINGS: 6 PEOPLE    PREP TIME: 15 MIN    COOK TIME: 30 MIN    TOTAL TIME: 45 MIN

CUISINE: NORTHERN GHANAIAN

2 cups of long grain jasmin or basmati rice  
 1 small ball of dawadawa  
 5 large fresh tomatoes  
 1/4 cup vegetable oil or shea butter  
 4 large red onions  
 5 bay leaves  
 1 thumb-size ginger or half a tbsp  
 1 tsp of garlic  
 1 tbsp of paprika  
 1 tbsp curry powder  
 1/2 tbsp rosemary  
 Salt to taste  
 1.5 cups water

Medium sized sauce pan  
 Blender  
 Chopping board & knives  
 Silicon or wooden ladle set  
 Cooking source  
 Napkins

Something to eat the rice with

Blend together the tomatoes(4), ginger, garlic, roughly chopped onions (3) and paprika in 1/2 cup of water.

In a pot or saucepan at medium heat, cook or saute finely sliced onions and chopped tomato in melted Shea butter.

**Optional** then add in the tomato paste and saute together with onions and tomatoes for 5 minutes.

After 5 minutes, add in the blended mixture with 1/2 cup of water, stir properly and cover well to allow the sauce simmer and reduce for 10 minutes.

Next, turn down the heat to low and add the bay leaves, rosemary, curry powder and Dawadawa and stir well to mix properly and cover for 10 minutes to properly infuse the aromatics in the sauce.

Measure the same quantity of water as is the rice and add it to the spiced sauce, add salt after adding the water and sure its slightly salty and turn the heat back to medium and let it boil. Once it boils, add the rice immediately and stir properly, turn down the heat back to low and over to let it cook.

After 10 minutes, fold over the rice (get the rice from the bottom to the top) then place a parchment paper or foil on top of the pot and cover.

Check after 20-25 minutes for the softness of the rice by folding in to get the button part to the top again and cover again till the steam make the rice soft and cooked.

Once its cooked, serve hot by garnishing with green peas and fresh basil on the top.

If you want to add more flavour you can use liquid broth instead of water.