



## HEALTH & LIFESTYLE

# Nigerian Chef Turns Local Crop Into Healthy Pasta

August 19, 2022

During a 2020 COVID lockdown in Lagos, Nigeria, **chef** Renee Chuks began experimenting with a new **pasta recipe**. Usually pasta is made from wheat. But instead of wheat, Chuks used crops grown locally, like cassava and plantain, as her pasta base.

Now, she sells the dried food in health food stores and online. She named her business Aldente Africa. She says it is among the first in Nigeria to make gluten-free pasta.

Chuks is part of an international movement to avoid gluten, a protein found in some grains, including wheat. Many people seek wheat substitutes because gluten can create health problems.

Cassava is one such substitute for wheat. It is a root vegetable rich in minerals and Vitamin C. Nigeria is one of the world's biggest producers of cassava.

Gluten is a protein found in wheat and some other grains. Humans **digestive** systems cannot break down gluten completely. While this is not a problem for most people, some people get sick from undigested gluten. One example is an autoimmune response to gluten called celiac disease. Celiac can damage the small intestine.

However, Chuks has other goals besides avoiding gluten. She says Africa should use more locally grown crops to help improve food security on the continent. African countries, she adds, need to consider the foods they eat every day --- like cassava.

Chuks said, "We figured, let's start with that. If we are able to get good success with cassava then everything else will follow."

The chef also found that plantain and the small grain fonio works well for pasta-making. She adds local **herbs** and vegetables for taste and color. Some of her pastas are green or pink.

Chuk's company also produces **wines** made from hibiscus plants, as well as herbs for cooking.

I'm Anna Matteo.

*Angela Ukomadu reported this story for Reuters News Agency. Anna Matteo adapted her story for VOA Learning English.*

---

## Words in This Stories

**chef** – *n.* a skilled professional cook

**pasta** – *n.* a dough of flour, eggs, and water made in different shapes and dried or used fresh

**recipe** – *n.* a set of instructions for making something (as a food dish) by combining various things

**digestion** – *n.* the body's process or power of changing food into simpler forms that can be taken up and used : **digestive** – *adj.* relating to or functioning in digestion

**herb** – *n.* a plant or plant part used in medicine or in seasoning foods

**wine** – *n.* an alcoholic beverage made from the fermented juice of grapes

---

*We want to hear from you. Do you have a similar expressions in your language? In the Comments section, you can also practice using any of the expressions from the story.*

*We have a new comment system. Here is how it works:*

*Write your comment in the box.*

*Under the box, you can see four images for social media accounts. They are for Disqus, Facebook, Twitter and Google.*

*Click on one image and a box appears. Enter the login for your social media account. Or you may create one on the Disqus system. It is the blue circle with “D” on it. It is free.*

*Each time you return to comment on the Learning English site, you can use your account and see your comments and replies to them. Our comment policy is [here](#).*

---