



ARTS & CULTURE

Self-taught Chefs Win Michelin Guide Star

March 09, 2023

Georgiana Viou is self-taught chef, or cook, from the west African country of Benin. She moved to France in hopes of becoming a **translator**.

Instead, she opened a restaurant there.

On Monday, her restaurant was awarded a star by the Michelin Guide. A restaurant is considered highly respected if it is awarded a star by the Michelin guidebook.

Viou's restaurant is called Rouge. It is in the southwestern French city of Nimes.

Viou was not the only self-taught chef to get the award this year. A chef who studied **literature**, David Degoursy, and pastry chef Jeanne Satori, with a degree in sustainable development, also won a star for their restaurant de:ja. That is in Strasbourg, in eastern France, where the yearly awards ceremony was held.

Of the 44 new Michelin stars given out this year, Viou's is the only one won by a single woman. Several other women were honored as part of a team, like Satori, the pastry chef at de:ja.

Viou, who is 45-years-old, has said her **cuisine** is a mix of French Mediterranean and Beninese food. She has written several books about Benin's cooking.

Becoming a chef was a backup plan for Viou. She came to France in 1999 to study languages at Sorbonne University in Paris, hoping to become a translator. But after working at a communications company, her life changed directions. At age 33, cooking took over.

As a chef in training, she was one of the few women in the male-centric world of professional cooking. She said she does not like being judged because of her sex or skin color. She said that “it’s completely **ridiculous**” to be considered “a la mode” for being a Black female chef. A la mode is French for “**fashionable** or modern.”

Instead, she wants to only be judged for the food she serves.

Viou learned to cook from her mother, who had a small restaurant in Benin. She first worked toward becoming a chef in Marseille. She joined Rouge, in Nimes, after it opened in June 2021.

Viou's Michelin star was given for her cuisine that celebrates “her Mediterranean environment and Benin **roots**.”

She was emotional at the awards ceremony. At Rouge, “We’re not a team. We’re a family,” she said.

I’m Dan Novak.

Dan Novak adapted this story for VOA Learning English based on reporting by The Associated Press.

Words in This Story

translator — *n.* a person who changes words written in one language into a different language

literature — *n.* written works that are considered to be very good and to have lasting importance

cuisine — *n.* a style of cooking

ridiculous — *adj.* extremely silly or unreasonable

fashionable — *adj.* currently popular

roots — *n.* the family history of a person or a group of people
