

“I WANT TO CONTINUE TO GROW AS A BRAND AND EMPOWER MORE INDIVIDUALS BY BEING A PIONEER IN THE VEGAN COMMUNITY AS AN AFRICAN VEGAN CHEF” SAYS CHEF COLA FOUNDER AT AFRICAN VEGAN ON A BUDGET

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Nicola Kagoro, a.k.a. Chef Cola, is a pioneering female Zimbabwean vegan chef at the helm of African Vegan on a Budget. Founded in 2016, African Vegan on a Budget was developed to showcase Chef Cola's cuisine and culinary development as well as to actively promote the reality that people can thrive on a healthy vegan and plant-based diet on a budget.

Chef Cola is a hospitality management graduate whose path and journey took her not only to veganism, but also to being on the culinary frontlines of presenting vegan food and lifestyle in Africa and advocating its great benefits- both nutritional and environmental. One of Chef Cola's primary aims through her work with African Vegan on a Budget is to spread awareness of vegan culture across Africa and give people the tools and knowledge to actively integrate plant-based eating into their lifestyles.

Her Interview with Beetroot Africa:

1. What is African Vegan On A Budget?

African Vegan on A Budget is a Plant based brand based in Zimbabwe and South Africa. We focus on Plant based activities and activism. We have clients in the Anti Poaching industry where we develop and manage kitchens in Rural Zimbabwe to hosting Private Dinners in Cape Town, South Africa. Our main aim is to expose veganism and plant based diets to all walks of life.

2. What inspired the creation A.V.O.A.B?

After having trained in Cape Town at a vegan restaurant named PLANT for 3 years. I noticed a gap in the market. There was a large group of people who where interested in Plant based and vegan diets. However they kept away from it because they felt vegan diets tasted bad , veganism was expensive and only meant for white people and that you lost a lot of nutritional value in your meals going vegan. So I created A.V.O.A.B and decided that our goals and main priorities was to get rid of this misconception. My inspiration also came from seeing a lack of representation from Black African vegan chefs in the market.

3. Who is Nicola Kagoro?

I am a 31 year old female who is a Plant based and LGBTQI+ activist. I grew up in New York City from the age of three along with my twin brother, elder sister. My mother she was a diplomat at the time. I am an Aquarius so I don't really like speaking about myself. I enjoy painting and silence.

4. Being a Vegan Chef, would you describe yourself as an entrepreneur and how do you view the entrepreneurship landscape for chefs in Africa?

I describe myself as an entrepreneur with or with out my vegan Chef hat. I run multiple businesses. I own A.V.O.A.B, Rainbow Friendly Festival (A LGBTQ events and activist company), African Inspired Dreams (A private holding and investments company) all registered and managed in South Africa and I am involved in multiple ventures in Zimbabwe. Entrepreneurship is something that comes naturally for me and I enjoy it very much.

When it comes to being a vegan Chef I am also an entrepreneur because I do not just cook plant based dishes, I create events , concepts, community rural development

projects for NGOs and more. So it became entrepreneurial when I stepped out of the kitchen and into more of an administrative and pioneering role.

Because of social media the landscape is becoming wider and more competitive now. You can become overwhelmed if you try to compare your self with other brands. Now every one who is a chef is a brand and an entrepreneur. We are not just investing and exposing our skills for fun. I love how the culinary industry is being forced to reinvent itself with social media.

5. Do you create Vegan African dishes from traditional African ingredients?

Yes I do I keep my ingredients as indigenous as I possibly can. Hence the name African Vegan on a Budget. I do use other western ingredients to mix with African ingredients.

6. Vegan dishes are not quite common in our society, what has been the response to your dishes from your market and do you see more Africans embracing Vegan food?

I beg to differ. I believe that vegan food is common in our society to the extent I feel veganism originated in Africa. Our ancestors did not consume as much meat as we do today. It was because of colonization we as Africans were taught to breed mass numbers of animals for their selfish reasons, fast forward to this day and age this is why people of non color own the biggest meat industries in the world. Our ancestors did eat meat but only on special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, ceremonies. When they killed they would dry the meat to make it last longer. Our diets were mainly plant based. Fortunately yes more Africans are turning to the vegan diet I feel it is mainly for health reasons and more affordable options. Meat is so expensive these days a lot of households are skipping meals with meat in them and the cooks of the family are becoming more creative with plant based and Vegan dishes.

7. What impact does African Vegan On A Budget have in the development of the society, how is your company contributing to poverty elimination, employment creation and social transformation?

We work in rural Zimbabwe creating garden programs that have nutritional value for school children. We not only teach them how to grow the food, they learn how to cook

the vegetables also. We emphasize on working with indigenous ingredients that they can find at an affordable rate or grow themselves. These are life skills that they will carry forever that create not just employment but the spirit of entrepreneurship and social transformation in their communities.

8. What does the future hold for Chef Cola?

I am currently working on a cook book to be out around holiday season 2021 ?

Besides that I want to continue to grow as a brand and empower more individuals by being a pioneer in the vegan community as an African Vegan Chef.

9. Branded African Chefs are not quite common, how do you plan on expanding your brand?

Using social media the most powerful tool of the 21st century. That is what has given me the strength and courage to continue to move. I interact and see what people think about our brand daily. We continually are creating content or working on concepts to expose our brand more.

10. What advise would you give to young aspiring chefs?

Start investing creating content that is professional it helps your brand to grow and you never know who is watching. And don't forget to taste what you cook a lot of people are not tasting while they cook and that is why it looks great but tastes like unidentifiable spices.

...ENDS....



Contact Chef Cola

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/chefcola>

Twitter: https://twitter.com/chef_col

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/africanveganonabudget/>

Email: colakavhu@gmail.com