



BETUMI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

African Food and Culture Comes to the Table



Finally, a book devoted to sub-Saharan African food and culture. One that talks about them in a way both accessible and knowledgeable. Despite the fact that Africa is the second-largest continent in the world, Africa's foodways remain easily the most unfamiliar to North Americans. ***Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa*** (part of the Greenwood Press series *Food Culture around the World*) is out to change that.

It's been 35 years since the last similar contribution, Laurens van der Post's *African Cooking*, a part of the Time-Life *Foods of the World* series. The continent has changed greatly in the years since 1970, and Osseo-Asare's thoughtful contribution fills a conspicuous void in culinary literature.

This book invites and deserves a very wide distribution. As series editor Ken Ablala wrote when convincing the author to undertake the task: "this particular volume is. . . especially important because it's probably the one students know nothing about, and the one most people have misconceptions about, too." Librarians will treasure it. Teachers in K-12 will find it a gold mine of information for their Africa units. It should be required reading for any college student taking an introductory African culture class. Culinary professionals should welcome it as a basic building block of culinary literacy. And "foodies" will delight in its freshness and enthusiastically embrace learning new ways with traditional American foods (like "groundnut," or peanut, soup) or traditional African ways with new foods (plantain chips). General readers will find its contextualizing of the interplay between African history, politics, geography, religion, sociology, economics and foodways fascinating.

Faced with the daunting task of covering 47 diverse countries in a single volume (most of the other volumes in the series deal with single countries, such as Spain, Italy, Japan, Great Britain, China, India, Mexico), Osseo-Asare has organized the book regionally. Chapters examine historical and geographical features, major foods and ingredients, cooking techniques and equipment, social relationships and food, typical and special meals and occasions, diet, and health

aspects of western, southern, eastern and central Africa, respectively. (Africa north of the Sahara is covered in another volume.)

While not a cookbook, there are over twenty doable illustrative recipes sprinkled throughout its 224 pages, such as *akara* and palaver sauce from western Africa, prawns Mozambique (*peri peri* shrimp) and *chakalaka* salad from southern Africa, *chapati* and *doro wat* from eastern Africa, *mbanga* soup and *bidia* from central Africa. There are numerous other helpful components: illustrations, a timeline of African culinary history, a glossary, a resource guide including web sites, literature and films, plus an extensive index and bibliography.

Sociologist and culinary historian Fran Osseo-Asare has been an observer of and writer about Africa for over three decades. She holds an MSW degree in community organization and social planning from U.C., Berkeley, and a Ph.D. in rural sociology, with an emphasis on social change and African development, from The Pennsylvania State University. She has written for *Gastronomica* and *Sojourners* magazines and is the author of several books, including *A New Land to Live In* and the widely acclaimed *A Good Soup Attracts Chairs: A First African Cookbook for American Kids*. Since 1997 her pioneering website, BETUMI (www.betumi.com), has connected scholars, professionals, and anyone else with an interest in African cuisine and food history and provided a global forum for discussion. She is currently writing a book on regional cooking of Ghana, *The Good Soup Comes From the Good Earth*.

Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa by Fran Osseo-Asare

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