

Food and Culture:
**Textual Analysis on the Representation of Food and Drink in
African Literature**

Raga Sownthariya. K., II M.A. English

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Introduction

The pleasure of reading about what others eat and drink is similar to that of being fed. Thus, from ancient Greeks to emerging works, food and drink have supplied with sizzle and spice to the printed texts. One among such work is *Purple Hibiscus* by the Nigerian writer Adichie. The work contains different kinds of Nigerian contains that has in it lot of herbs, spices, meat, rice and beans.

Implications of Food

Eating never stops in *Purple Hibiscus* and almost every page has some interesting dishes like plates of Jollof Rice, Utazi curry, Fufu, Egusi soup, Moi moi and Palm wine to name a few.

Food such as Egusi soup and Utazi Curry appears in the novel when Kambili, the 15-year-old narrator, imagines what the usual lunch in her family is like. The mention of Cashew wine takes us to the factory that Kambili's father owns and his act of presenting each new food or drink that is manufactured to be tested by the family. This wine is also an implication of domestic abuse and we see that Kambili gulps it down just because she couldn't refuse his father and becomes sick of it later.

Among all Jollof rice is a constant food that exists throughout the novel. Jollof is usually eaten at birthdays, burials and many other occasions coexisting in all spaces and time. The first appearance of it is made when Beatrice is seen serving Jollof rice to the nuns at her home and thus it acts as a symbol of thoughtfulness and care. It is neither a meal of elite or poor and is used as a welcome meal despite poverty. Only the accompaniment to the rice varies according to the social status and it is evident through the contrast both in Kambili's house and in Auntie Ifeoma's house, where there is moi-moi and fist size chunks of fish in the former and miserly pieces of meat in the latter.

The last mention of Jollof rice is at the closing pages where Mama takes it to the prison to feed Jaja as a reminder of home and family, who was imprisoned for taking charge of killing Papa Eugene.

“She is setting out a cylindrical food flask full of Jollof rice and chicken. She places a pretty chins plate down as if she were setting a fancy table”

The tension between the members of family is seen when they dine together. Kambili’s father constantly warns his children not to touch any food that is offered to them on their visit to Papa –Nnukwu, their grandfather, who is considered a heathen by Papa Eugene. He also gets extremely angry when he comes to know that his children is sitting along with Papa-Nnukwu in Auntie Ifeoma’s house and then brings them back to Enugu.

Decline of Nigerian Culture

There is an increasing influence of western culture seen in Papa Eugene and his behaviour where he constantly trains his children to speak in English and even while dining he insists on the western mode of table manners. In Papa Nnukwu’s house it was a custom to eat sitting over the raffia mat on the floor but in Eugene’s house they usually sat on the table and ate using forks and knives provided with a napkin.

“The sounds of forks meeting plates, of serving plates, of serving spoons meeting platters, filled the dining room, Sisi had drawn the curtains and turned the chandelier on, even though it was afternoon”

Apples in *The Smell Of Apples*

The Smell of Apples is a novel by Mark Behr that was published in 1995. The mere title of the books has in it the element of food and throughout the work it serves as an anecdote and is associated with white supremacy, European civilisation that was opposed by natives.

““They stink. Smell this”, and he holds the apple to my nose. I smell the apple in his hand. It smells sour.”

Works Cited

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Raga Sownthariya. K., II MA English
Department of English and Foreign Languages
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore
Tamil Nadu
kragasowntharya@gmail.com

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