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INTERVIEW WITH CHEF BADARA GUEYE, CHÂTEAU DE CANDIE

FROM DAKAR TO THE FRENCH ALPS, CHEF BADARA GUEYE'S JOURNEY HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY. NOW EXECUTIVE CHEF AT CHÂTEAU DE CANDIE IN CHAMBÉRY, HE BLENDS HIS SENEGALESE ROOTS WITH CLASSIC FRENCH TECHNIQUE, CREATING DISHES THAT ARE AS EXPRESSIVE AS HIS ARTWORK—MANY OF WHICH ADORN THE CHÂTEAU WALLS. HERE, HE SHARES HOW FOOD AND ART FUEL EACH OTHER, AND WHAT IT MEANS TO COOK WITH SOUL IN A PLACE STEEPED IN HISTORY.



Let's start at the beginning. You've had quite an extraordinary journey—from dishwasher in Dakar to executive chef in a 14th-century French château. What do you remember most vividly about those early kitchen days in Senegal?

Yes indeed, I have had a long journey, full of surprises. But what has stood out for me from the start is the new tastes and smells, the difference in flavors between French and Senegalese cuisines.

Your story is full of resilience and transformation. How did your personal challenges shape your philosophy both as a chef and as a person?

During my journey, at one point I was hired to work on an oil tanker to cook for the crew and we spent six months

at sea. This is one of the moments I will always remember in my career. It got me to learn a lot about myself and the people around me.

Also, I was shaped by being the oldest in my family and by deciding to leave the extremely difficult living conditions at home.

These experiences helped me grow: I fix goals in my life instead of limits.

You wear two hats—chef and painter. When did you first realise that art, as much as food, would be part of your life's work?

I have always been fascinated by creativity – in whichever genre of art. My focus on nature is one of the best inspirations for my cuisine.



But as I always say, if I wasn't a chef, I wouldn't be a painter and vice versa. My everyday life is full of questions and creation. I sometimes create an abstract taste cooking and I am the only person understanding it, or I create an artwork as if I was cooking.

Do you find that your cooking and painting feed into each other creatively? How do these two worlds overlap for you?

Yes indeed, I believe I am a chef because I am an artist but not only that. I try to understand the impact of the ingredients and products that I cook within my everyday life. This also works the other way around: I paint pieces of my life, driven by my cuisine that brought me where I am today.

Your artwork now lines the walls of Château de Candie, giving the place such a unique identity. How did it feel to see your paintings displayed in the space where you also cook every day?

Firstly, I felt very proud and of course a lot of gratitude towards the management of the Château. Sharing my cuisine and my paintings with clients in such a symbolic place in Chambéry is pure bliss.

At La Cantine de Candie, you champion local ingredients but infuse them with flavours from your Senegalese heritage. Can you tell us about a dish that really captures this balance?

From the start at La Cantine de Candie, I wanted to showcase a cuisine that resembled me. Today most of the weddings that we cater ask for the omble chevalier sauce kaldou riz soufflé. The omble chevalier is the emblematic fish of the local Lake Bourget; kaldou is a famous sauce from the south of Senegal and of course rice is very popular in Senegalese cuisine. This balance represents my personality in between two cultures.



“ My everyday life is full of questions and creation. I sometimes create an abstract taste cooking and I am the only person understanding it, or I create an artwork as if I was cooking. **”**

One of your standout dishes this season is the veal rump with blackcurrant and beetroot jus. What was the inspiration behind that pairing, and what do you hope guests experience when they taste it?

Always looking for new flavors, the idea came to me to introduce Spring fruits and vegetables into the main course. A veal rump cooked at 72 degrees with the core temperature at 58 degrees served in a crust, with a condiment (seasoning) of blackcurrant, beetroot juice, butter, and panko.

The colour: red and purple to represent early Spring blossom as well as my love for nature.

How do you approach evolving your menu each month? Is it driven more by seasonality, emotion, or experimentation?

I use all 3 words: experiment, emotion, seasonality.

I consult my horticulturist every month to know which fruit or vegetable is in peak season. I attach a very special importance to seasonality for all the produce and I make sure we prioritise local products as much as possible. With these principles in mind, I can build the menu.

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You've worked across continents and cultures—from the Petite Côte to the Périgord to the Alps. How have these places influenced your style in the kitchen?

Yes, my cuisine is open to the world. It's a personal way of cooking with influence from the Ivory Coast, Mauritania, as well as different regions in France, but also Ukraine, North Africa and Japan. It symbolises my life, my story.

You arrived at Chateau de Candie just after the pandemic, at a time when the hospitality world was in flux. What was it like stepping into that role during such a pivotal moment?

I've always been resilient and had the capacity to overcome difficulties and



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the pandemic was one of them. I didn't want to be a spectator; I needed to be an actor. I wore the painter's hat and shared my art on social media. I tried to spread an important message: human dignity and vulnerability of the human species. My role at the chateau when I stepped in was to prepare for the post-pandemic, the reopening of the Chateau.



The Chateau is more than a restaurant—it's also a gallery, a wedding venue, a retreat. How do you keep the guest experience feeling personal and soulful in such a multifunctional space?

The Chateau is a sumptuous place where all kinds of events take place amid shared moments of happiness.

Our philosophy is to offer all clients an à la carte experience based on quality service and unforgettable moments.

Looking ahead, do you see yourself continuing to blend art and food, or is there another creative direction you dream of exploring next?

At the moment I create and innovate daily. I will push my boundaries to the limit as much as I can. Maybe one day, one art genre will take over another but I will let time decide about that.

