

# South African food chains in UK examined on CNN Marketplace Africa

London is a cosmopolitan kaleidoscope, with a restaurant scene to match. Its high streets play like a round-the-world pit stop of cuisines, and increasing woven among them are African restaurants. Yesterday on CNN Marketplace Africa, CNN correspondent Rosie Tomkins explored how South African restaurants in particular are staking their claim in the UK food market.



Washington Kapapiro is Chairman of the Association for African-Owned Enterprises. He believes in the prospect of successful African food brands in the UK, telling Marketplace Africa: "For me what's most exciting is the growth of what we call African food. People are starting to identify with that brand."

With 'that brand' comes opportunity for chains on the continent to expand overseas and London is seen as the golden ticket.

David Maich, UK director of the Spur Corporation, a steakhouse from South Africa, tells the programme: "All brands across the world are testing their models in London - if it works here it will work anywhere."

One South African food chain leading the charge in the UK is Nando's. Created in South Africa in 1987, Nando's came to the UK in 1992. Twenty-three years later, the restaurant which successfully blends Portuguese and South African roots with affordable family fayre has almost 400 branches on UK high streets.

## Not a copy-and-paste rigid brand standard

Maich said of Nando's to Marketplace Africa: "It's a tremendous success because they have been flexible, adapted concept; not a copy-and-paste rigid brand standard they adopted."

Maich is among those hoping to follow in Nando's footsteps and become another successful South African chain planting its flag on UK soil, with Spur. He tells the programme: "We're now positioning ourselves for the UK market which is more

vibrant, more cutting edge, punchy - and this cries out to the customers and to me that this is the way to go."

South African expats in the UK are welcoming these food chains to London as Maich tells Marketplace Africa: "They're great - very loyal supporters - and great ambassadors - but we have to think broadly; we have to think of the UK customer profile and that's who we're targeting across the board."

Another South African company vying for a position in the UK market is The Meat Co, a restaurant with the traditional South African dish, basted beef, as its speciality.

Like the Spur Corporation, The Meat Co has adapted its South African roots to suit the UK market. Johnny Tomazos, CEO of Food Fund International (the company that owns the Spur Corporation) tells Marketplace Africa: "Here at The Meat Co, the African link is perhaps more subtle. This is not about tribal art on the walls, or ornate and more traditional décor, the Africa they wish to take global is modern Africa, and the hallmark of the dining experience - their beef!"

The growing success of African restaurants in the UK is no surprise to Washington Kapapiro. He attributes a uniquely African can-do spirit to the success of South African restaurant chains in the UK: "Let's solve the problem - let's not stick to our rules. I think that culture is the foundation for a lot of growth we've seen in the African business sector."

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