

# Nigerian entrepreneur turns local crops into gluten-free pasta

By [Angela Ukomadu](#)

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Renee Chuks, a trained chef, started experimenting with making pasta from cassava in her Lagos kitchen during a national lockdown in Nigeria in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic.



CEO of Aldente Africa Renee Chuks serves gluten-free pasta made of cassava to a customer during a weekly farmers' market in Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria June 25, 2022. REUTERS/Terrilade Adelaja

She uses locally grown crops like cassava and plantain to produce hand-made pasta infused with herbs, which she now sells via her company, Aldente Africa, set up two years ago.

Aldente Africa is among the first companies to make gluten-free pasta in Nigeria, she says. The country is one of the world's biggest producers of cassava, a root vegetable rich in minerals and Vitamin C, and Chuks believes Africa should make more use of its locally grown crops to help improve food security on the continent.

"We looked inward to like, what kind of products we have that we eat every day. Cassava is one of our major, major products... so we figured let's start with that, if we are able to get good success with cassava then everything else will follow," says Chuks from her company's base in Lagos.



CEO of Aldente Africa Renee Chuks serves gluten-free pasta made of cassava to a customer during a weekly farmers' in Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria June 25, 2022. REUTERS/Temilade Adelaja

She also uses plantain and fonio, a small grain crop grown in West Africa, which she infuses with local herbs and vegetables, giving some of her pasta a green or pinkish tint.

Her products track a global trend toward plant-based food. Complete with elegant packaging and retailing at US\$2-US\$5 per pack of pasta, they cater to a relatively affluent consumer for now.

Wheat-based pasta is a staple food in Nigeria and Chuks sees plenty of room for growth in the market for her alternative products, which she sells online and in health shops. Her company also produces alcoholic wines made from hibiscus plant and herbs for cooking.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Additional reporting by Seun Sanni, Editing by MacDonald Dzirutwe and Susan Fenton.

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