

JANUARY  
2025

BANK & ENTREPRENEUR | FOODPRENEURS AFRICA (ATLANTA EDITION)



# Bank & Entrepreneur | AFRICA

JANUARY 2025

VERDURE KITCHEN

10 DEGREES SOUTH

THE BUTTER CRUMBLE

ATLANTA'S FOODPRENEURS  
SERVE UP A MODERN TWIST ON  
AFRICA-INSPIRED DELICACIES



## CULINARY ARTISTRY

CHEF MICK ÉLYSÉE PROVES HE'S A  
MASTER OF HAUTE AFRO-FUSION CUISINE



# From The Editor

## THE FOOD AGENDA



Anne N. Agbakoba  
Editor-in-Chief

**T**he recent Agriculture Summit Africa (ASA) 2024, themed "From Scarcity to Security," brought together leaders from 30 countries to address food security and agriculture transformation across Africa, and aiming to turn Africa's agriculture into a multi-trillion-dollar industry.

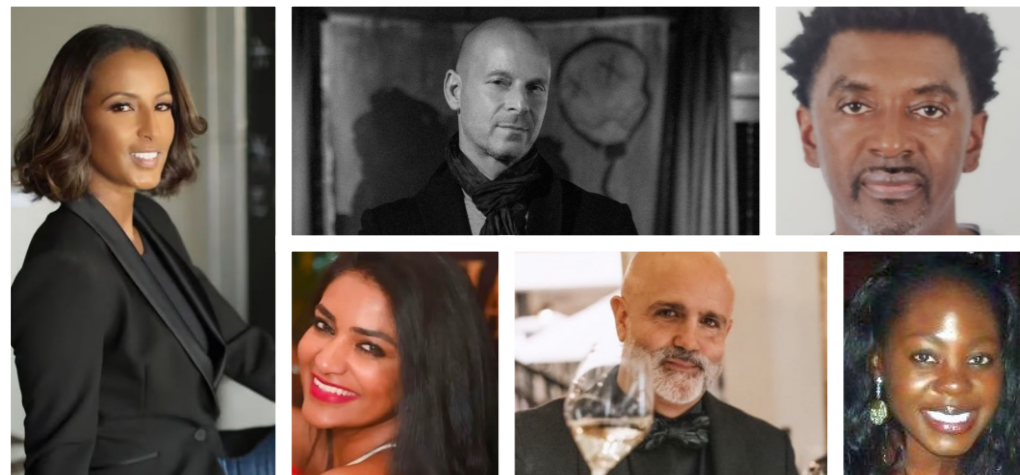
Against this backdrop, the January 2025 issue of *Bank & Entrepreneur Africa* (whose focus is African foodpreneurs in the Atlanta-USA region), is inextricably tied to several fall-outs from ASA 2024 which directly affect the food service industry - access to reliable supply chains, sustainable farming, and adopting emerging agricultural trends that restaurateurs can incorporate into their offerings (such as farm-to-table dining).

It is especially pleasing to hear our Cover persons (Franco-Congolese Chef **Mick Élysée** and Zimbabwe's Chef **Gracia Bvute**) talk convincingly gastronomy, zero waste, resilient crops, as well as food security and diversity.

Our main feature highlights five high-achieving food service providers (**The Butter Crumble**, **Verdure Kitchen**, **10 Degrees South**, **One Street Over**, and **Rock Steady ATL**) - all leaders for their combined skill set of eco-dining awareness, craftsmanship, and a mastery of culinary presentation.

Enjoy the read – and photos – as they expand your culinary choices over several holiday seasons.

[anne@numeris-media.com](mailto:anne@numeris-media.com)



■ INTRODUCING CHEF MICK ÉLYSÉE

# RAISING

He comes across as intense. Exact, even. Perhaps, the reason for his ability to intuitively combine the bold, rich flavours of Congolese and African cuisine with the sophistication of French cooking. His unique dishes are widely praised for their refreshing take on both culinary traditions.

Meet **Chef Mick Élysée** – the celebrated Franco-Congolese chef, recognised for his innovative approach to sustainable and health-conscious cuisine.

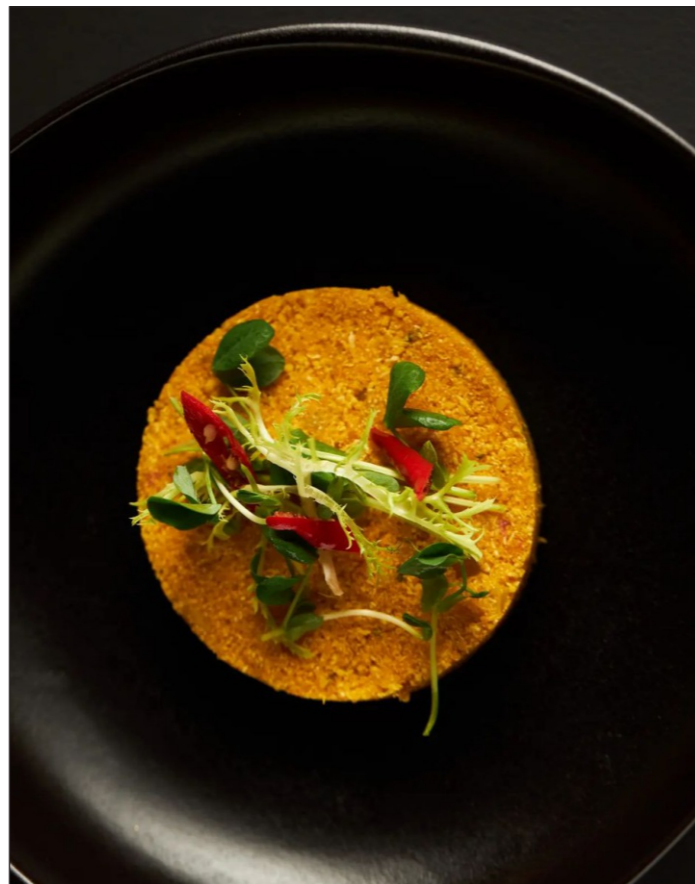
Born in Brazzaville, Congo, **Élysée** fled the civil war at 14 and sought refuge in France, where he discovered his passion for cooking. Mick trained at one of the top culinary schools in Toulouse and, at just 22, opened his first restaurant, La Gascogne.

Over the next decade, he refined his craft, working in prestigious Michelin-starred restaurants and luxury hotels across the globe.

In 2015, frustrated by the lack of representation for African cuisine, he launched a private chef and consulting business in London, earning acclaim for his eco-friendly take on Pan-African gastronomy.

Chef Mick is also the author of a cookbook "Not Guilty: My African Cuisine Guilt-Free," which reflects his commitment to sustainable cuisine and zero waste.

Today, Mick serves as the Executive Head Chef at **NsuomNam** in Accra, Ghana. This first-of-its-kind fine-dining restaurant in the region specialises in fish and seafood, championing sustainability while elevating Pan-African cuisine to global prominence.



"Embrace the power of ancient grains! Millet, sorghum, and fonio aren't just staples in African cuisine, they're nutritional powerhouses and sustainable choices, too!"

# THE GAME

📍 @yschefmickelysee



# Bespoke Nourishment

Chef Mick Elysee's culinary artistry has earned him a loyal following and widespread acclaim. In an interview with Anne Agbakoba, she pointedly asks him the two most frequent questions received by *Bank & Entrepreneur Africa* about the standout aspects of his career and work:

**What are the fantastic benefits of the African ancient grains (sorghum, millet fonio)? Please share just one recipe made from one of them.**

These ancient grains—millet, sorghum, and Fonio—have been staples for thousands of years, with millet originating in China, sorghum in Africa, and fonio cultivated in West Africa for over 5,000 years. Back home in Congo, they're often used only for porridge, but their potential is much greater. I incorporate them into salads, side dishes like my Jollof Millet, gluten-free bread, cake bases, and even protein shakes before the gym.

Since working with the Smart Food Campaign of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), and organisations like Women for Women UK, I've been passionate about promoting these grains. My goal is to raise awareness about their nutritional and environmental benefits, helping consumers explore new recipes while encouraging governments to support farmers and industries in growing these resilient crops. Not only are they rich in nutrients, but their ability to thrive in arid climates makes them ideal for food security in regions like Africa, Asia, and even the Middle East.

It's true, some people are hesitant about their taste, but once cooked correctly, they're absolutely delicious. I've seen firsthand how versatile they are, and

I'm committed to showing others the endless possibilities these crops offer.

- Millet is highly nutritious, gluten-free, and rich in essential minerals like magnesium, phosphorus, and iron. It is known for promoting heart health, aiding digestion, and stabilising blood sugar levels.

- Sorghum is equally impressive, being high in antioxidants and fibre, making it great for digestive health and reducing inflammation.

- Fonio, often considered a superfood, is a powerhouse of amino acids, making it excellent for muscle repair and energy. It is also a low-glycemic grain, which helps maintain balanced blood sugar.



Millet and Sorghum Watermelon Tartlet

**Ingredients for the crust**

80 g millet flour  
80 g sorghum flour  
75 g butter (melted)  
30 g honey or maple syrup  
Pinch of salt  
1/4 tsp nutmeg (ground)

**For the filling**

Fresh watermelon, cut into desired shapes  
Fresh berries (e.g., strawberries, blueberries)  
Fresh mint leaves for garnish

**For the watermelon mint curd**

1. In a small saucepan, mix 200 g watermelon puree, 20 g lime juice, 20 g sugar, and fresh mint leaves. Heat over medium heat until the sugar dissolves.  
2. Remove from heat and whisk in 2 eggs until

combined. Return to heat and cook, whisking continuously, until it thickens.  
3. Strain the curd into a bowl, let it cool slightly, and then mix in 75 g cubed butter using a stick blender until smooth. Refrigerate until firm.

**Instructions**

1. Preheat the oven to 175°C (350°F).  
2. In a bowl, combine millet flour, sorghum flour, melted butter, honey, salt, and nutmeg to form a dough.  
3. Press the dough into tartlet moulds and bake for 12-15 minutes until golden. Allow to cool.  
4. Spoon the mint curd into each tartlet, top with watermelon shapes, and berries.  
5. Garnish with fresh mint leaves before serving.



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*Beyond the food, managing a successful restaurant means mastering business acumen. From working with suppliers and understanding pricing to managing staff and operational efficiency, every detail counts. It's also crucial to keep innovating—whether through creating a new menu or developing a product line.*

*What, from your experience, does it take to start and run a successful food business?*

To start and run a successful food business, I've learned that it takes more than just culinary passion—it requires vision, resilience, and a deep understanding of your audience and market. I opened my first restaurant, La Gascogne, in France at 22, which taught me valuable lessons in leadership, creativity, and adaptability.

Opening La Gascogne was a whirlwind experience that required quick learning. One moment that stands out was when I faced a staffing shortage during a busy holiday season. I had to step into multiple roles—cooking, managing the floor, and even sourcing ingredients last minute. It was a real test of adaptability. Instead of panicking, I got creative, simplifying the menu to focus on quality over quantity, which not only saved the day but also strengthened the team's bond under pressure.

From that point, my global experiences—working in countries like Japan, UK, France, Italy, and Brazil—shaped my approach to combining different cuisines. It's essential to stay open to learning and evolving your craft. The most important thing is creating a unique concept and delivering consistent quality. In my case, that meant integrating sustainable and diverse African flavours into fine dining, something that wasn't widely represented at the time. I worked hard to ensure these flavours gained international recognition by hosting pop-up restaurants and serving high-profile clients.



*Plating and visual presentation are essential elements in running a successful food business. Customers eat with their eyes first, and a beautifully plated dish creates an immediate connection before the first bite. It's not just about aesthetics—it's about elevating the dining experience.*

Plating and visual presentation are essential elements in running a successful food business. Customers eat with their eyes first, and a beautifully plated dish creates an immediate connection before the first bite. It's not just about aesthetics—it's about elevating the dining experience. I've always believed that plating plays a key role in allowing dishes to be recognized at an international level. In my work, I ensure each plate tells a story, combining flavours, colours, and textures to make the dish memorable both on the palate and visually.

Beyond the food, managing a successful restaurant means mastering business acumen. From working with suppliers and understanding pricing to managing staff and operational efficiency, every detail counts. It's also crucial to keep innovating—whether through creating a new menu or developing a product line.

Finally, running a business requires passion, but also patience. For me, that's the driving force behind not only my private chef business but also my work in launching restaurants and promoting African cuisine globally.

■ ON THE MENU



Make it local, keep it sustainable: Garden Red Snapper. Pan-roasted Tema Snapper, plantain tube coated in Ademe and garden herbs, Chilli-Tarragon and garlic butter



Sorghum Bread Bruschetta, Ghanaian seafood and chilli salsa



Char-grilled organic and wild lobster with spicy pasta



Ghanaian poached lobster with palm wine pickled Cucumber & Ginger jelly



Plantain and chicken



Ndakala. Congolese finger food for a Happy Hour



Lamb, mwamba (peanut sauce) and okra



Congolese cuisine: Chilli mwamba sauce, Bitéku-Téku, roasted Springbok and black mushroom mousse

**CHEF MICK ÉLYSÉE. FOOD MADE TO INSPIRE**

Exquisitely seared strip steak infused with Nigerian Suya flavours, accompanied by sautéed spinach and a luscious creamy sauce enriched with Ashanti pepper (a botanical treasure from the West African coast), also known as Melegueta or Alligator pepper

■ FEATURE: VERDURE KITCHEN & COCKTAILS

# Cultured Dining

**C**hef Jean-Louis Sangare, originally from Côte d'Ivoire, fulfilled his dream of highlighting African cuisine by opening Verdure Kitchen & Cocktails in Atlanta's Midtown in July 2024, alongside partners Aïda Lemma and Jacob Ilkner.

After nearly two decades at Le Bilboquet in New York and Atlanta, Sangare brings a French-trained approach to African-inspired dishes.

Verdure's menu creatively celebrates flavours from countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia, Senegal, and Ghana, offering a creative and elevated menu of signature dishes that include Chicken Yassa and creamy lobster mac and cheese, Egusi hummus, charred okra with Ethiopian berbere aioli, pan-seared branzino

stuffed with heirloom tomatoes and spices, and a crispy octopus that sits atop corn purée (a tribute to corn's prominent use in Africa, says Sangare)..

The restaurant's ambiance complements its cuisine, featuring lush botanical designs and a striking cocktail program led by Betty Tesfaye, who draws inspiration from Ethiopia's Lake Bishoftu Resort.

Located near Piedmont Park, Verdure has quickly gained attention for its distinctive cuisine, thoughtful service and inviting atmosphere, which enhance the dining experience of guests. It is an exciting addition to Atlanta's culinary landscape, led by Sangare who has a deep passion for creative and globally influenced cuisine.



Tender octopus with a perfectly crispy exterior, accompanied by a velvety corn puree, fragrant green herbs, spicy pickled onions, and finished with a drizzle of Verdure oil.



Chef Jean-Louis Sangare  
[Photography by restauWant]

Justin Anthony  
(Founder, 10 Degrees  
South - part of the  
True Story Brands  
Group)

■ FEATURE: 10 DEGREES SOUTH

# On your mark. Steady. Go.

# O

Originally born and raised in South Africa, Anthony Justin was 23 years old when he relocated to the US where he played professional soccer, hitting the fields as a striker for the Atlanta Ruckus. This was in 1996, and he certainly did not see himself as a future Foodpreneur – not until a knee injury forced him into early retirement.

As a sidelined 23-year-old living in a foreign country, Anthony's began to think that his income-earning options were limited. Whenever his mind wandered, he recalled his days as a professional ball player in London, and

how the existence of a South African sports pub located nearby made him feel a little less homesick for Johannesburg.

That was a lightbulb moment for Justin – he looked around at all the expatriates in Atlanta, and saying to himself: “Let’s create something special for them”- he went ahead to open the first authentic South African restaurant in the United States, 10 Degrees South. This, in 1998, alongside his parents, Derek and Diane.

Today, Restaurateur and entrepreneur Justin Anthony is known to have founded True Story Brands as a South African inspired hospitality group comprising iconic Atlanta dining destinations: 10 Degrees South, Yebo Beach Haus, Biltong Bar and The Cape Restaurant & Beach Bar.

Beyond simply serving remarkable food and drink, True Story Brand’s mission is to take people on a culinary safari, showing them the best of South African food and culture. This philosophy of being welcoming, kind and inclusive is best summed up in a uniquely South African saying — **JUST BE LEKKER.**



The Cape Kingklip, a grilled South-African fish dressed in a lemon butter sauce with basmati rice and sautéed vegetables on the side



Lobster spring rolls, prepared with mildly-spicy lobster meat and topped with house-made Peri-Peri Aioli





# Best-selling pies. By. Adaobi

Adaobi Ofor is the founder of The Butter Crumble, a unique bakery in Atlanta known for its Nigerian-inspired handheld pies. Emphasising fresh, handcrafted pastries, The Butter Crumble offers both sweet and savoury options, such as the classic Nigerian beef pie and innovative flavours like blueberry. All pies are baked daily using high-quality ingredients to ensure rich and authentic flavours.

Inspired by traditional Nigerian cuisine, the Butter Crumble café offers a range of unbelievably tasty sweet and savoury pie options, such as their signature beef pie, filled with Angus ground beef, vegetables, and spices - as well as vegetarian, chicken, and seafood pies. For those with a sweet tooth, their dessert selection features blueberry cream, apple tart, peach cobbler, and pecan pies.

The bakery prides itself on crafting fresh, handmade pies daily and serves as a popular spot for a taste of African-inspired comfort food.

Ms. Adaobi Ofor, has successfully blended a passion for creating unique culinary experiences with her Nigerian cultural heritage to make the café a go-to spot in Atlanta.

This is reflected in an Instagram exchange between the bakery and a friendly client, **@chow\_a\_la\_carte**:

**@chow\_a\_la\_carte:**  
Did we tell how much we love Adaobi? Come and taste her delicious pies! For the amount of pies I consume, I might need intervention ☐

**thebuttercrumble:**  
**@chow\_a\_la\_carte** no intervention needed!

[thebuttercrumble.com/](http://thebuttercrumble.com/)



# FUSION MAGIC

# M

Mable Abraham and Faven Resson are co-Founders of Maven Hospitality and joint owners of One Street Over. Born and raised in India, Mable is an accomplished deal maker and business leader with a demonstrated history of working in both established and hyper growth

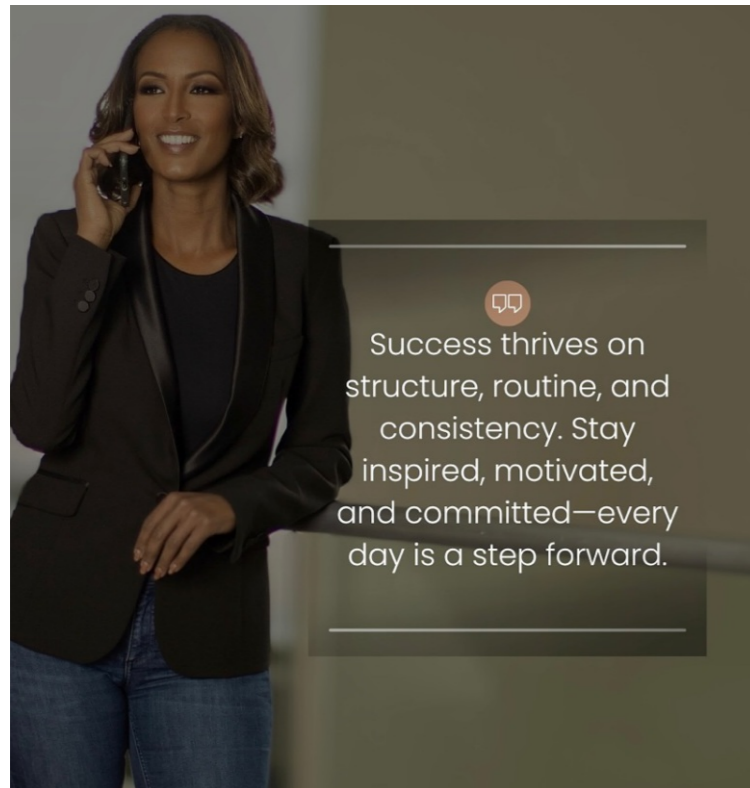
environments. On the other hand, Faven is originally Ethiopian, imbued with a contagious zest for life, and has racked up over 23 years of high-energy experience in the hospitality industry. She is described as the dynamic force driving the success of the Maven Hospitality Group.

Faven and Mable have established One Street Over in Atlanta as an opulent, cozy and vibrant spot that stands out for its inviting atmosphere and creative menu, offering a unique fusion of Indian, Ethiopian, and Eritrean flavours.

The menu features a variety of small plates, such as tapas, salads, entrées, and desserts, with some of the popular dishes including the braised chicken (inspired by Ethiopian Doro Wat), tikka chicken flatbread, salmon tandoori, spiced corn ribs, and indulgent desserts..

What sets this restaurant apart is its emphasis on fresh, locally sourced ingredients that inspire unique dishes. The menu often changes to reflect the season, ensuring a dynamic dining experience with every visit.

[onestreetoveratl.com](http://onestreetoveratl.com)



**Faven Resson**  
Co-Founder, Maven Hospitality &  
Owner, One Street Over



**Mable Abraham**  
Co-Founder, Maven Hospitality  
& Owner, One Street Over



**Berberé Ribs Taco:** Ribeye cubes coated in Berbere (a spice mix that is a key ingredient in Ethiopian and Eritrean cooking), garnished with Arugula lettuce, grilled onions, Avocado Crema, and flour tortilla



Founder of Rock Steady Atlanta, Joseph Russo

# Pleasing Demanding Palates

Joseph Russo is the founder of Rock Steady, an Afro-Caribbean restaurant and lounge located in Atlanta's West Midtown neighbourhood. He has over 30 years of experience in the hospitality industry, with a career shaped by extensive travels through South America, Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. These experiences inspired Russo's vision for creating venues that blend music, culture, and food to foster inclusivity and vibrant connections.

His Atlanta venture, Rock Steady, is a modern dining experience with a menu that marries West African and Caribbean influences, sending diners on a special gastronomic journey.

The establishment's chefs, acclaimed masters, have crafted a plethora of flavours spanning Jamaica, Haiti, and West Africa. Whether it's an innovative oxtail pasta dish tinged with traditional spices, or the hearty warmth of goat stew,

and specialties such as the Haitian Whole Fried Snapper and Jerk Grilled Chicken (which pay homage to Haiti and Jamaica), Rock Steady promises that each bite will be a revelation, celebrating the depth and breadth of Afro-Caribbean culinary influence with a modern twist.

The restaurant's entire ambience is enhanced by curated Afro-Caribbean music and a design inspired by diasporic art and textiles.

Before opening Rock Steady, Russo had established several successful venues in Chicago, such as The Shrine, a live music venue, and Coup d'Etat, a cocktail lounge. These spaces were celebrated for attracting diverse audiences and hosting artists from genres like Reggae, Afrobeat, and Hip-Hop.

[rocksteadyatl.com](http://rocksteadyatl.com)



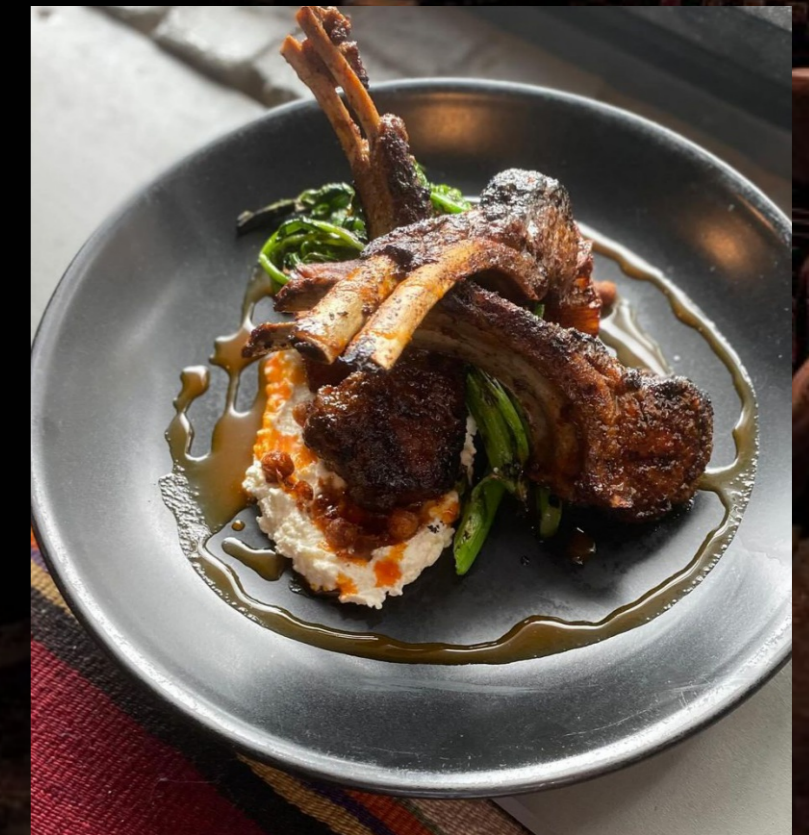
Goat, rice, Bannan Peze (fried unripe plantain), Pikliz (a spicy, crunchy, and tangy Haitian condiment made from pickled cabbage, onions, carrots, and bell peppers)



Haitian whole fried snapper for dinner. Fried, epis-marinated whole red snapper, Pikliz, Djon Djon rice (Haitian mushroom rice and peas), fried sweet plantains, charred lime



Beef patties - made with Caribbean spiced beef, house-made curry dough, Pikliz de Gallo, and topped with Mojo Rojo sauce



#ChefsSpecial: Berbere lamb chops, herb potato cake, charred rapini, whipped feta, saffron-carrot glaze, spiced chickpeas