

VARIETY: There are many grill, barbecue and sports bars in Rwanda, several owned by Kenyans. The nyama choma joints also serve East Africa's signature food ugali and sukumawiki, along with other popular local foods.

POPULAR NYAMA CHOMA HITS KIGALI

Jean Pierre Afadhali, Special Correspondent

The consumption of roasted meat, known as nyama choma in Kenya, has become popular in Rwanda as returnees from the diaspora and other foreigners from the region come to the country.

Traditionally, meat is loved by many in Rwanda, especially grilled meat — *brochettes* — served on skewers. Brochettes are sold mainly in pubs where people meet to socialise, share drinks and eat the meat served with grilled bananas or potatoes spiced with sauce.

There are many grill, barbecue and sports bars in Rwanda, several owned by Kenyans. They are popular among people who have lived in Kenya, expatriates, Kenyans, Rwandans and tourists.

Wahome Car Wash and Restaurant in Kigali is arguably the most popular such joint, where nyama choma

is a specialty. Jefferson Rumanyika, a Kigali resident who has lived in Nairobi, describes the venue as the “capital city of nyama choma” in Rwanda.

Now, in Rwanda, there is an annual festival dubbed “Nyama Choma Extravaganza,” where meat lovers meet to have fun and eat roasted and grilled meat. The third edition took place early this month, but it turned out to be more of a beer party than about meat. There were only two food stands, one for nyama choma (goat, beef, and chicken) and the other for brochettes.

The organisers acknowledged the low participation this year, saying that many exhibitors were reluctant to participate because last year, the event was disrupted by security organs for “noise pollution.”

Zachary Mswati, the man behind Nyama Choma Extravaganza, said they are determined to promote the



nyama choma culture in Rwanda.

“This piece of meat, the whole goat rib, the whole leg, the *mutura* (traditional Kenyan sausage), that’s what we are trying to bring to the table in Rwanda, for them to experience what the rest of the region enjoys,” he said.

Traditionally, at bars and parties, and nowadays at supermarkets, people buy brochettes: Nyamirambo, a vibrant suburb in Kigali, is known for “cheaper brochette,” at Rwf 300 (\$0.4) while at other places they are sold for Rwf 600 (\$0.8) or Rwf 1,000 (\$1.3) depending on the bar or hotel.

If you go to coastal cities like Mombasa and Zanzibar, they have meat recipes that you cannot find in Kigoma or Kisumu.

“In every culture, they have their own ways of preparing meat,” said Mswati.

Rumanyika frequents nyama choma joints in Kigali mainly to socialise with his friends, but he says he prefers brochettes.

Mswati says that meat is part and parcel of African culture. “When there is a wedding and at important functions, meat is served.”

The nyama choma joints also serve East Africa’s signature food ugali and sukumawiki, along with other popular local foods.

There is a similar social event in Tanzania dubbed “Nyama Choma in Dar es Saalam,” and Kampala, that bring together people from all walks of life.

Above and below, nyama choma roasts at an extravaganza.
Pics: Courtesy

