

Naijamaican Webdiva's Editorial January 2008
Bush Meat/Game vs Animal Cruelty

Bush meat known as game in the UK is widely consumed in African countries including Nigeria. Whilst many in the UK and the 'developed world' may see this as a cruel and horrid habit; I thought it might be worthwhile highlighting some of the practices/ethos behind this.

Tracking back to recent times, countries like Nigeria and many other African countries have been subject to civil wars, famines, droughts and economic instabilities leading to imposition of curfews, imposition of embargos on production of and marketing of foods and many other social restrictions. The primary impact on many of these events was initially an extreme shortage of food, mainly of conventional protein giving foods such as cows, ducks, pigs, chickens and fish.

Looking through and recalling some accounts of civil wars and many other economic instabilities, many would tell you categorically that even Lizards, mice, locusts and other small rodents and animals became food. You either ate or died.

Times are much better now, and in general terms, bush meat in Africa is prestige food and extremely expensive. In truth, wars were not the motivational factor to consuming these foods, they were consumed to supplement, complement and support what can sometimes be a limited diet either as a delicacy or as a treat.

A local farmer in the village will definitely proudly show you the carcass/es of the bushrat/s that have been eating his yam and vegetable tubers before they could mature to harvest time and of course in true pattern yield it on to the highest bidder so he can support his family.

In countries such as the UK, you can find game in the shops imported from European and other countries and in most cases, the animals are farmed as kindly as possible, slaughtered and packaged for shops. This is a slightly different matter from the issue of leisure and fun hunting of animals during set seasons of periods. Even then, many game hunting elitists in England will argue with you that the intention is to keep continuity of tradition and the port and sherry are for courage rather than to engage in primitive and dangerous habits. My opinion, each to his own, we own no one but ourselves.

My parting line,...its okay to love the animals, the earth and the sea and so on, but let us take a moment of silence for the lives lost and living in countries where they live on our junk and unwanted things that are recycled and shipped over at exorbitant rates by businesses here in the UK, to the land where they do not have much control over what the next day may bring, where coups and civil unrise is common and where they all live in hope and maintain a positive outlook even when they have no power supply, little access to clean water, adequate healthcare albeit paid for, pay above the odds sometimes to live in decent homes, get an education and to simply survive till the next meal.

To people in Africa and those privileged to have grown up there, the perspective is different.

Let us stop sometimes and look at things through others eyes. It instils respect for the things we take for granted and as any African would say to you, 'cor mate, you definitely have a full belly, a mansion of your own, a brain full of cotton and loads of money to spare if you have time to run around chasing or harming somebody because they eat rabbit a few times a year'. In Africa, a majority do not have that.