

**FOOD, FAMILY, AND NOSTALGIA: THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF IDENTITY
AMONG NIGERIAN DIASPORANS**

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Abstract

This study examines the complex interplay between food, family, and nostalgia in shaping the cultural identities of Nigerian diasporans. While previous research has explored diasporic identity and cultural retention, there remains a significant gap concerning the specific role of traditional culinary practices and familial relationships in sustaining cultural belonging among Nigerians living abroad. Drawing on qualitative data from in-depth interviews with 20 Nigerian diasporans across three major cities—London, Toronto, and Houston—the study highlights how traditional Nigerian cuisine functions not merely as sustenance but as a powerful medium for cultural resistance, memory preservation, and intergenerational transmission. Thematic analysis revealed that food practices within families serve as both emotional and cultural anchors, helping participants navigate the pressures of assimilation while reinforcing their sense of identity and belonging. Nostalgia emerged as a recurring theme, with memories of home-cooked meals and family gatherings providing comfort and a symbolic connection to Nigeria. The findings underscore the resilience of cultural identity in the diaspora and demonstrate how food and family act as critical tools for maintaining cultural continuity in a globalized and often alienating environment. This research contributes to diaspora and migration studies by offering deeper insight into how everyday practices sustain cultural identity over time and across borders.

Key Words: Nigerian Diaspora, Culinary Traditions, Identity Construction, Nostalgia

Cultural Resistance

Introduction

The Nigerian diaspora has expanded significantly in recent years, driven by various factors such as economic opportunities, educational pursuits, and political instability within Nigeria. As Nigerians settle in different parts of the world, they bring with them rich cultural traditions, particularly those related to food and family, which serve as crucial components of their identities. Food is not merely sustenance; it embodies cultural heritage and social connections, acting as a

powerful symbol of identity for diasporic communities (Ogunyemi, 2017). The act of preparing and sharing traditional Nigerian dishes fosters a sense of belonging and continuity among individuals who may feel disconnected from their homeland. Nostalgia plays a significant role in this dynamic, as many diasporans experience a longing for their cultural roots, often evoked through memories of family gatherings centered around food. This nostalgia can create emotional ties that reinforce cultural identity, making it an essential aspect of the diasporic experience (Akintunde, 2020). In a globalized world where cultural homogenization is prevalent, exploring how Nigerian diasporans utilize food and family to maintain their identities becomes increasingly important. The rationale for this study stems from the need to understand the complexities of identity formation within the Nigerian diaspora. While existing literature has examined various aspects of migration and identity, there is a notable gap in research specifically addressing the interplay of food, family, and nostalgia among Nigerian diasporans. By focusing on these elements, this study aims to provide insights into how individuals navigate their identities amidst the challenges of cultural assimilation and the pressures of living in a foreign land. The primary objective of this research is to explore the cultural politics of identity among Nigerian diasporans through the lenses of food, family, and nostalgia. The study seeks to investigate the role of culinary traditions in shaping identities, examine the contributions of familial relationships to identity construction, analyze the impact of nostalgia on the diasporic experience, and explore how foodways serve as a form of cultural resistance against assimilation pressures. By addressing these objectives, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of identity among Nigerian diasporans, highlighting the significance of food and family in their cultural narratives.

Nigerian Diasporans: A Historical Overview

The Nigerian diaspora has a rich and complex history that reflects the broader patterns of migration, colonization, and globalization. The movement of Nigerians abroad can be traced back to several key events, including the transatlantic slave trade, colonial migration, and contemporary global migration trends.

The transatlantic slave trade, which lasted from the 16th to the 19th centuries, forcibly removed millions of Africans, including many Nigerians, from their homeland. This period significantly impacted the demographic and cultural landscape of Nigeria, as well as the regions where enslaved Nigerians were taken. The cultural legacies of these early migrations are still evident today in the African diaspora, particularly in the Americas, where Nigerian cultural elements have influenced music, cuisine, and religious practices (Falola, 2001).

During the colonial period, which began in the late 19th century, many Nigerians migrated for educational and economic opportunities. The British colonial administration established schools and institutions that allowed a select few Nigerians to gain higher education, leading to the

emergence of a new educated elite. This group often sought opportunities abroad, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States, to further their studies or pursue careers in various fields (Ogunyemi, 2017).

Post-independence in 1960, Nigeria experienced significant political and economic challenges, including civil unrest, military coups, and economic instability. These factors prompted waves of migration as Nigerians sought better opportunities and safer environments abroad. The Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) further exacerbated this trend, leading to a significant number of Nigerians fleeing to other countries as refugees or asylum seekers (Adepoju, 2005).

In recent decades, the Nigerian diaspora has continued to grow, driven by globalization, economic opportunities, and educational pursuits. According to the United Nations (2019), Nigeria is one of the largest sources of migrants in Africa, with millions of Nigerians residing in various countries, particularly in North America, Europe, and other parts of Africa. This contemporary migration is characterized by a diverse demographic, including students, professionals, and families, all contributing to the cultural fabric of their host countries while maintaining connections to their Nigerian heritage (Ojo, 2020). As they navigate their diasporic experiences, food, family, and nostalgia remain central to their cultural identity, reflecting a deep connection to their roots.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in a robust and interdisciplinary theoretical framework that not only draws from critical theories of identity, diaspora, and cultural continuity but also interrogates them through empirical engagement with Nigerian diasporic experiences. By engaging deeply with lived practices around food, family, and nostalgia, the study extends existing theoretical discourses while reaffirming and, in some cases, reconfiguring their assumptions.

Cultural identity theory: Stuart Hall's (1990) theory of cultural identity, which positions identity as a process rather than a fixed essence, underpins the study's core assumption that diasporic identities are fluid and constantly in negotiation. This study affirms Hall's formulation by showing how Nigerian diasporans invoke traditional culinary practices and family rituals not merely to preserve a nostalgic image of "home," but to actively renegotiate their place in dynamic host societies. The findings reveal that these practices are neither static nor merely symbolic but serve as living, evolving expressions of identity. This adds nuance to Hall's thesis by providing grounded examples where identity construction is performative, embodied, and sensory—especially through taste, smell, and communal participation in food preparation and consumption.

Black Atlantic: Paul Gilroy's (1993) "Black Atlantic" framework, which highlights the hybrid and transnational nature of Black diasporic identities, finds resonance in this study's data. Nigerian diasporans are shown to exist within a diasporic continuum where the local and the global collide, such as in the preparation of egusi soup using European ingredients or the digital sharing of food-

making tutorials across transnational networks. However, while Gilroy conceptualizes hybridity as a transformative and liberating process, this study reveals that such cultural transformations are often fraught with ambivalence, resistance, and intergenerational tensions surrounding the preservation and authenticity of identity. Thus, the study expands Gilroy's work by introducing the idea of hybridity-within-tension, especially as it plays out in familial settings where notions of "real Nigerian food" become sites of debate between generations.

Diasporic Space: Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of "diasporic space", which emphasizes the overlapping geographies of belonging, exclusion, and cultural negotiation, is central to understanding how everyday spaces such as the kitchen are reimagined by Nigerian diasporans. Brah's framework is affirmed in this study, particularly in the findings that show how domestic and communal settings serve as arenas of cultural performance and memory-work. However, this study nuances Brah's conceptualisation by demonstrating how diasporic space is not only a site of cultural production but also a stage for emotional negotiation—especially regarding nostalgia and longing for home—which can both unite and divide families depending on generational perspectives.

Transnationalism: The framework of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009) is reinforced in the findings, which illustrate how food and family traditions are maintained across borders via digital platforms, remittances, and cultural events. Yet, this study also adds to the discourse by highlighting the asymmetry in transnational ties: while older diasporans actively maintain contact with Nigeria, second-generation diasporans often express identity more through symbolic acts such as food consumption than direct political or emotional engagement with the homeland.

Symbolic Ethnicity: In this context, Herbert Gans' (1979) "symbolic ethnicity" proves especially pertinent. While Gans' theory traditionally addresses selective ethnic practices among assimilated generations, this study shows that symbolic ethnicity is not always superficial. For younger Nigerian diasporans, engaging with traditional foodways and participating in national celebrations may be symbolic, but these acts are emotionally and culturally charged, contributing meaningfully to identity formation and inter-generational cohesion.

Glocalization: Finally, glocalization (Robertson, 1995) enriches the understanding of how diasporans creatively adapt cultural practices to their local contexts. The study reaffirms glocalization as a strategy of cultural resilience and expression. However, it advances this discourse by showing that such adaptations are often deliberate, reflexive acts of resistance against cultural erasure, not mere compromises to new environments.

Thus, the theoretical implications of this research demonstrate that food and family are not just residual traditions in the Nigerian diaspora but active, contested, and dynamic sites through which identity is continuously articulated, negotiated, and politicized.

Role of Nostalgia and Culinary Traditions in Diasporic Identity Formation

Nostalgia and culinary traditions serve as powerful forces in shaping the identities of Nigerian diasporans, offering emotional and cultural anchors in the midst of dislocation and assimilation. As Nigerians navigate life in foreign environments, nostalgia emerges as a deeply felt longing for the homeland, often expressed through memories of family gatherings, traditional celebrations, and familiar comforts. This longing becomes more than sentimentality—it becomes a mechanism of cultural survival. Havlík (2019) defines nostalgia as a bittersweet yearning for the past, imbued with both warmth and loss. For many diasporans, this emotional pull towards home strengthens their connection to cultural roots and shapes how they interact socially and culturally in their host countries (Akintunde, 2020).

Nostalgia is not merely an individual emotional state; it actively contributes to the preservation of cultural practices. Ogunyemi (2017) notes that diasporans often respond to the pressures of assimilation by returning to familiar cultural symbols. Traditional foods, music, and rituals become essential tools for maintaining a cultural identity that feels under threat. For instance, the preparation of dishes like jollof rice, egusi soup, and pounded yam during festive occasions functions as a symbolic recreation of home (Chikwendu, 2019). These rituals of remembrance offer more than sustenance—they foster continuity and belonging, especially when shared within community settings. The importance of nostalgia becomes even more evident in social dynamics among diasporans. Ojo (2020) argues that shared experiences of longing often lead to the formation of close-knit communities abroad. Within these groups, members support one another emotionally and culturally, creating safe spaces where traditional practices can flourish. Cultural festivals, religious events, and communal meals allow Nigerian diasporans to reinforce their identity collectively. These events also serve as moments of cultural resistance—asserting the value of one's heritage in environments that often pressure conformity.

Intergenerational relationships further reveal the impact of nostalgia on identity formation. According to Adepoju (2005), while older generations tend to preserve memories and customs rooted in their Nigerian upbringing, younger generations often straddle two cultures—negotiating between inherited traditions and the cultural expectations of their host country. Tensions may arise when nostalgia-driven practices from parents clash with children's attempts to assimilate. Yet, these frictions can also spark dialogue, fostering a shared, evolving identity that accommodates both the past and present. Culinary traditions are central to this process of identity negotiation and reinforcement. Food is not only a sensory experience but also a vessel of history, memory, and cultural pride. Ogunyemi (2017) affirms that traditional Nigerian cuisine, with its diverse regional influences, carries narratives of origin and communal memory. For diasporans, preparing these dishes is a way of connecting with their past and asserting their cultural identity. Cooking becomes a symbolic act of remembrance and resistance, evoking the warmth of family, celebration, and homeland (Akintunde, 2020). Moreover, food preparation in the diaspora often involves

adaptation, leading to culinary hybridity. Nigerian dishes may incorporate local ingredients or preparation methods from the host country, creating new forms of expression without losing cultural essence. Chikwendu (2019) views this culinary fusion as reflective of a fluid and dynamic diasporic identity—one that is rooted in tradition yet open to reinterpretation. This blending allows diasporans to retain authenticity while engaging with new cultural contexts, promoting both cultural continuity and dialogue.

The familial dimension of culinary tradition also plays a critical role. Ojo (2020) notes that food rituals—such as communal cooking, festive meals, and recipe sharing—become important moments of intergenerational transmission. Within these domestic spaces, elders pass down not only cooking techniques but also values, stories, and cultural knowledge. These shared practices reinforce familial bonds and serve as a means of preserving culture through everyday activities.

Research Methodology

To explore how food, family, and nostalgia intertwine to shape cultural identity among Nigerian diasporans, this study employed a qualitative methodology rooted in interpretivist epistemology. Given the deeply personal and affective nature of the subject matter, qualitative interviews were the most effective way to access the rich, embodied experiences of individuals navigating life in diasporic contexts. The research sought not only to document practices but to understand meanings—how people make sense of home while living far from it.

London, Toronto, and Paris, were chosen for the study, three global cities, with vibrant Nigerian communities, each shaped by different colonial legacies, migration histories, and integration policies. London offered a familiar terrain of postcolonial ties and intergenerational migration; Toronto, with its multicultural framework, enabled reflections on belonging within diversity; and Paris brought unique insights into language, identity, and exclusion—particularly among Nigerians from Francophone West Africa.

Across these locations, 20 Nigerian migrants aged 25 to 65 shared their stories. “Sundays are for jollof,” said Tolu, a 34-year-old nurse in London. “It’s not just food—it reminds me of home, of my mum shouting in the kitchen.” In Paris, Ada, a second-generation Igbo woman, explained how her family gathers every Christmas to prepare *ofe oha*, saying, “Even though we are here, that soup makes us feel like we never left Nigeria.” These recollections of food preparation and consumption revealed how culinary rituals serve as emotional and cultural anchors.

Participants were recruited via churches, diaspora associations, WhatsApp groups, and personal networks. Interviews were held through phone calls and video calls online. Each conversation lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, following a semi-structured format that allowed flexibility while remaining focused on food memories, family traditions, and expressions of longing. The data, transcribed and in some cases translated from Pidgin or indigenous languages, were full of

poignant moments. A man in Toronto confessed, “Whenever I smell egusi, I get emotional. That was my grandma’s favourite soup. I cook it now, just to feel close to her.”

Thematic analysis, based on Braun and Clarke’s model, enabled the identification of recurring patterns. Themes such as “Food as Cultural Anchor,” “Intergenerational Tensions,” and “Nostalgia as Resistance” emerged organically from the narratives.

Findings, Analysis, and Discussion

What emerged most vividly from the stories of Nigerian diasporans in London, Toronto, and Paris was how deeply food, memory, and familial rituals remain central to identity-making in foreign lands. Across the board, traditional cuisine was not just something eaten but something lived—evoking home, shaping belonging, and resisting the homogenizing pull of life abroad. In every kitchen, plate, and family gathering, identity was being negotiated in often subtle but powerful ways.

Chioma, a nurse in London, described how her Sunday ritual of cooking ogbono soup with pounded yam connects her to her mother, who remains in Nigeria: “It makes me feel like she’s in the kitchen with me.” In Toronto, Adebayo shared a similar sentiment, insisting that “amala and ewedu are non-negotiable” in his household, because through food, his children learn their Yoruba heritage. In Paris, where access to Nigerian groceries is more limited, Zainab detailed how she sometimes travels as far as Brussels for dried fish and seasoning cubes: “It might seem excessive, but it keeps me sane.” These actions, while seemingly mundane, reflect a deep-seated desire to maintain cultural continuity, especially in places where external structures don’t always support it.

Alongside food, nostalgia emerged as a strong emotional current, often triggered by smells, family gatherings, or even quiet moments of solitude. For Nonso in Toronto, “I can’t eat moi moi without thinking of my grandma’s kitchen... it brings tears to my eyes.” Fatima in London simply missed “the noise of Lagos, the way my cousins would crowd the kitchen.” These recollections did more than express longing—they revealed how memory becomes a tool for emotional survival in the diaspora. As Boym (2001) suggests, nostalgia is not merely about the past but a way of confronting present dislocation. Yet identity transmission across generations was not always smooth. Efe in London noted how difficult it was to get her kids to eat okra soup: “If they lose the taste, they lose the culture.” At the same time, others embraced adaptation—Obinna in Paris proudly taught his son how to make jollof rice with quinoa, while Damilola in Toronto embraced suya-and-shawarma fusion at Nigerian-Canadian parties. These examples reflect Bhabha’s (1994) idea of the “third space,” where cultural hybridity flourishes, blending tradition with the practicalities and influences of new environments.

Food also became a site of cultural assertion and resistance. Emmanuel in Paris said: “When I open my pot of egusi in this apartment block, everyone smells it. And I’m not sorry.” Similarly, Aminat

in Toronto brought puff-puff and pepper soup to office potlucks, explaining: “They might not like the spice, but they respect it.” These acts, though everyday in appearance, were powerful declarations of identity in spaces where Nigerian culture is often marginalized or exoticised. Overall, the findings suggest that food is more than sustenance—it is memory, resistance, education, and cultural pride. The way Nigerian diasporans cook, share, and talk about food reveals how identities are lived and shaped not through grand gestures, but through the intimate, everyday rituals of feeding oneself and one’s family. Across cities and generations, these practices become the vessels through which home is recreated and reimagined.

Foodways and Cultural Resistance

Foodways—which include the cultural, social, and economic dimensions of producing, preparing, and consuming food—are integral to the everyday lives and identity formation of Nigerians living in the diaspora. Beyond sustenance, food assumes a symbolic role in preserving cultural heritage and resisting the homogenizing forces of assimilation. Akintunde (2020) rightly observes that traditional Nigerian dishes such as Afang soup, ofe owere, and pounded yam are not merely meals but embodied narratives of ancestry, memory, and communal belonging. These dishes serve as vessels of identity, laden with emotional and historical significance, connecting diasporans to their roots in profound ways.

Expanding on existing scholarship, this study argues that foodways function not only as passive cultural markers but as active sites of resistance. By choosing to maintain traditional food practices in foreign environments, Nigerians assert their identity and subvert dominant cultural expectations. This view extends Chikwendu’s (2019) assertion that shared culinary experiences—through cultural festivals, communal meals, or religious gatherings—forge a sense of solidarity and visibility among diasporic Nigerians. These practices create culturally affirming spaces where language, memory, and taste converge, sustaining community resilience.

Yet, it is crucial to interrogate how foodways also reflect the hybrid, negotiated nature of diasporic identity. While Adepoju (2005) frames traditional food practices as political acts of resistance, this study builds on that argument by highlighting the creative adaptations within diaspora foodways. Ojo (2020) notes that the incorporation of locally available ingredients into traditional recipes not only ensures survival but also reimagines authenticity. This culinary hybridity challenges essentialist notions of culture and reflects the dynamism of Nigerian diasporic identity. Such adaptations—though grounded in heritage—symbolize the capacity of diasporans to innovate and rearticulate identity in response to their sociocultural environments.

Furthermore, the performance of food-related rituals can be interpreted as an act of cultural storytelling. Each meal prepared and shared becomes a narrative act—reaffirming family histories, ancestral ties, and collective memory. These rituals serve as counter-narratives to the invisibilisation of African cultures in dominant Western spaces. In this context, food becomes a

discursive tool, offering Nigerians in the diaspora a platform to challenge stereotypes, affirm cultural legitimacy, and engage in transnational identity work.

Comparative Analysis in the African Diasporic Experience

The intersection of food, family, and nostalgia within the Nigerian diaspora reveals not only personal strategies for coping with displacement but also broader cultural politics of belonging, memory, and resistance. While similar patterns are evident among other African diasporas—such as Ghanaians, Somalis, Botswanans, and Moroccans—the Nigerian experience is shaped by its unique historical, linguistic, and demographic dynamics, resulting in a more performative and assertive cultural expression, particularly through culinary practices.

Among all examined African diasporas, food serves as a core medium of cultural continuity. Like Nigerians, Ghanaians maintain strong links to their homeland through cuisine. Ghanaian diasporans in London, for instance, retain communal eating habits and ensure their children consume kenkey, banku, and shito (Osumare, 2012). However, Nigerian foodways tend to be more public, performative, and central to social identity. In cities like Toronto and London, Nigerian restaurants, YouTube cooking channels, and jollof rice cook-offs become active sites of cultural pride and transnational identity-making. The fierce “jollof wars” between Nigerians and Ghanaians in the diaspora (Osseo-Asare, 2005) further highlight how food operates as a symbol of cultural superiority and belonging within competitive diasporic narratives.

The Somali diaspora, especially in countries like the UK and Sweden, presents a different dynamic. Somali food traditions, such as canjeero or suqaar, are deeply tied to Islamic rituals, and their preservation often intertwines with religious identity (Kusow & Bjork, 2007). Whereas Nigerian diasporans tend to use food as a political statement of visibility and agency—Emmanuel’s unapologetic cooking of egusi in a Parisian apartment, for example—Somalis typically adopt more private culinary expressions due to their refugee histories and heightened sociopolitical marginalization in host countries. This contrast underlines the relative privilege and assertiveness of Nigerian diasporic identity, shaped by a larger population base and stronger diasporic networks.

From a Southern African perspective, Botswanan diasporans tend to show less emphasis on food as a marker of diasporic identity. Studies suggest that food retention exists but is often less ritualized than among Nigerians. The smaller size of the Botswanan diaspora and lower levels of cultural visibility abroad contribute to a less institutionalized culinary presence (Nthomang & Diraditsile, 2020). Nigerian diasporans, by contrast, create food-centred events—naming ceremonies, weddings, birthdays—where culture is reinforced and performed, revealing a more consciously curated identity culture.

Turning to North Africa, the Moroccan diaspora provides yet another point of comparison. Moroccan migrants, especially in France and Belgium, retain strong food traditions—couscous,

tagine, and mint tea—which are often linked to familial memory and Islamic values (Minca & Ong, 2016). However, Moroccan food has become somewhat “domesticated” into French culinary consciousness, often consumed without acknowledging its cultural roots. Nigerian food, by contrast, resists assimilation and retains its distinct identity, often due to its bold flavours, strong ethnic markers, and the pride with which it is presented. Nigerian diasporans are also more likely to use food as a tool of ethnic distinction—Igbo, Yoruba, Edo cuisines—within the broader Nigerian umbrella, reflecting internal diversity and linguistic pluralism often less pronounced in other African diasporas.

Additionally, nostalgia across African diasporas is universal, yet the Nigerian case is marked by a strong emotional attachment to regional and intergenerational continuity. As seen in this study, Nigerian participants often invoked their grandparents’ cooking or village customs as central to their sense of self abroad. This mirrors Moroccan family structures, where memory is rooted in matriarchal traditions and community meals (Mahmood, 2013). Yet the Nigerian approach is more eclectic, balancing traditionalism with innovation—such as Damilola’s fusion of suya with shawarma or Obinna’s quinoa-based jollof—demonstrating a hybridized identity that reinterprets the past for the present (Bhabha, 1994).

Conclusion

The intricate interplay of food, family, and nostalgia emerges as a foundational mechanism through which Nigerian diasporans construct and sustain their cultural identity. Food, beyond its nutritional value, operates as a potent symbol of heritage and belonging—offering emotional comfort, transmitting memory, and resisting the cultural erasures often associated with migration and assimilation. Traditional culinary practices, particularly when embedded in familial rituals and intergenerational transmission, become dynamic sites of cultural preservation and resistance. Family units serve as cultural conduits, where shared meals, oral traditions, and celebrations enable the active negotiation of identity across generations and transnational spaces. This study significantly contributes to the literature on Nigerian diaspora studies by highlighting the centrality of everyday cultural practices—especially food—in shaping diasporic consciousness. While previous research has explored identity through lenses of language, religion, and transnational networks, this work emphasizes the often-overlooked emotional and symbolic power of food and familial nostalgia in maintaining cultural cohesion. It draws attention to the socio-cultural processes through which diasporans navigate dual identities, adapt to host cultures, and reaffirm a collective sense of Nigerianness. Moreover, the findings extend the scope of diaspora studies by advocating for the inclusion of culinary heritage and familial interactions in broader discussions of migrant well-being and cultural resilience. They also bring attention to the urgent need for intergenerational transmission of indigenous languages, reinforcing the idea that language is inseparable from the broader cultural framework. This research advocates for a holistic approach to diaspora policy—one that values cultural programmes, supports digital and educational

initiatives, and actively encourages linguistic and culinary heritage preservation. By incorporating digital platforms, educational strategies, and community-driven practices, Nigerian diasporans can strengthen their cultural identity and ensure the survival of their traditions in foreign contexts. Ultimately, this study not only adds depth to our understanding of the lived experiences of Nigerian diasporans but also offers practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and cultural institutions invested in promoting inclusion, diversity, and intercultural dialogue. It calls for a rethinking of cultural preservation—not merely as nostalgia for the past, but as an adaptive and transformative force that shapes the future of diasporic communities.

Recommendations

Family Practices

Families should play an active role in preserving culinary heritage by involving younger generations in the preparation of traditional Nigerian dishes. Meals such as jollof rice, pounded yam, and egusi soup should be taught not only as recipes but as cultural artefacts, rich with meaning and memory. These kitchen interactions can become moments of storytelling and cultural bonding.

Regular family gatherings, communal feasting, and traditional celebrations should be prioritized to maintain cultural cohesion. Hosting community events that highlight Nigerian food and customs can instil cultural pride in younger members and reinforce a shared sense of identity.

Elders should be encouraged to share their personal stories about life in Nigeria, the migration experience, and the significance of food in their cultural worldview. These narratives offer valuable insights that enrich the younger generation's understanding of their heritage and deepen the emotional resonance of cultural practices.

Indigenous Nigerian languages should be spoken at home and in community spaces alongside the preparation of these meals. Participation in these activities enables young people to internalize the values of respect, solidarity, and unity (Ayeni & Umukoro, 2025). Parents and elders must prioritize language transmission by engaging children in everyday conversation in their native tongues. Community organizations and religious institutions can reinforce this by incorporating indigenous languages into their activities and services.

(2) Digital Strategies

Social media, blogs, and video-sharing platforms like YouTube can serve as powerful tools for cultural continuity. Nigerian diasporans should be encouraged to use these platforms to share recipes, cooking tutorials, nostalgic stories, and reflections on identity. Additionally, developing

mobile applications and digital content in indigenous languages can support linguistic preservation and culinary education.

Podcasts, audiobooks, and digital storytelling initiatives can bridge generational and geographical divides. These media forms can help younger diasporans engage with the sounds, stories, and philosophies of Nigerian culture in accessible, modern formats.

(3) Educational Institutions

Schools and community learning centres in diasporic regions should integrate Nigerian culture into their programming. Cooking classes, storytelling sessions, and discussions on food history can be used to foster cultural awareness and appreciation. These initiatives can foster inclusive learning environments that recognize and validate the cultural heritage of Nigerian children and youth. As Ayeni and Lori (2025) affirm, integrating traditional knowledge into educational programmes is crucial for ensuring its preservation and transmission. Academics and writers should be supported to document and critically analyse the relationship between food, nostalgia, and identity in the Nigerian diaspora. Promoting books, documentaries, and creative works on these themes can contribute to broader cultural literacy and intergenerational understanding.

(4) Policy Advocacy

Government bodies, cultural organizations, and diaspora networks should support Nigerian food businesses, festivals, and cultural events. Establishing Nigerian food hubs in key global cities can create economic opportunities, enhance cultural visibility, and provide spaces for community interaction and identity affirmation.

Collaborations between Nigerian and other African or global food communities can foster mutual appreciation and innovation. Fusion cuisines, collaborative food festivals, and intercultural cooking workshops can help diasporans adapt their food practices to new environments while maintaining core cultural values.

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