



Akwasi Brenya-Mensa

Akwasi Brenya-Mensa is a humble polymath whose professional journey has taken him across the globe, through the world of music with collaborative performances, DJing, events and music management roles, and with food at the forefront. Akwasi has worked within the food world for over 10 years as a restaurateur, street food operator, caterer, and most recently host of the successful, '**Mensa, Plates and Friends**' supperclub.

A London native, Akwasi lived in Sheffield for 16 years, before returning to the capital in 2016. This year will see Akwasi launch his biggest project to date, **Tatale**. This dining concept will offer a contemporary menu which celebrates and preserves the rich tapestry of African flavours and cooking traditions. This comes at a time when African cuisine is beginning to be recognised in a way it deserves - as expansive and exciting.

Born and bred in South London, Akwasi's parents instilled a strong sense of his Ghanaian heritage into his upbringing through food, culture and language – his first language was Twi and second language English, Akwasi identifies as Ghanaian-British.

High school was a challenging time, as only one of a handful of Black students, but Akwasi felt that this was a useful experience in terms of preparing him for the real world and professional environments. Akwasi attended Wilson's Grammar in Wallington, and moved to Sheffield to study Criminology, in 2000.

"It was an interesting time in this country to be studying criminology, as a black man. It wasn't too long after the Macpherson Report came out, regarding the Stephen Lawrence case. But ultimately, I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit (I was the kid setting up a tuck shop at school!), I had been learning to DJ since 15 and at university I began to organise parties, which became very successful"





The Food:

The Sheffield Years

Throughout his time in Sheffield Akwasi wasn't content on developing one career – in music – and became interested in UK's burgeoning burger scene. This was partly to do with his love of burgers “when dad was in charge of cooking when I was growing up, he would make us hot dogs and burgers for breakfast. I can eat a burger at any time!”. This led to pop-ups, markets and festivals, reaching to what Akwasi sees as the ultimate gig for the genre – cooking at Glastonbury.

“The first pop-up was dreadful! But I started to learn the craft of working in food and making changes. I'm very good at systems... the operation of things. I basically watched how Subway worked and knew that system was how we should organise getting our burgers made.”

In 2015 an opportunity arose to open a restaurant in the heart of Sheffield, and Akwasi credits the initial success to keeping things simple – a small selection of burgers and sides. Not long after the restaurant opened though, Akwasi moved to London and he eventually sold the restaurant in 2017.

The Food:

The Return to London

Food has always been a way for Akwasi to experiment and to connect with people and communities; his supperclub **'Mensa Plates and Friends'** demonstrates this and can be seen as a roadmap of how his food career will grow. The supperclub provided a space to explore foods from his travels – from ingredients and techniques – and working with artists such as musician Annie Oh.

"I loved visiting South Korea, so Annie and I discussed at length various dishes and then we cooked a lot, had conversations with her mother, and together developed a menu that was authentic to Annie, in taste and intention."

This same deliberate and thoughtful approach is how Akwasi will develop his focus on his own heritage, and look at the food of the African continent's diaspora in upcoming projects.



Tatale

Tatale, a restaurant and bar concept to enjoy great tasting food and innovative cocktails, in a space brimming with warmth and familiarity for all to enjoy.

'Tatale' is the name of a plantain pancake dish in Ghana; in 2019 Akwasi visited his parents home in Kumasi, Ghana for the 'Year of Return', and one of the first things they made him were these pancakes made from plantains from the plantain tree in the garden.

"I feel like regardless of where you are in the world, however you prepare or pronounce it, the plantain is synonymous with the black experience. So when I was coming up with a name for the restaurant, I felt that I wanted to name it something that was tied into that idea of being universal but also had meaning and relevance in my heritage."

Embodying the same spirit of the cherished Chop Bar, where across Africa its many variations offer space for school kids to enjoy breakfast, bachelors to dine in the early hours, playwrights to find their characters, and Highlife pulses from the stereo: Tatale will serve a 'Pan-African' menu featuring dishes and techniques originating from the Continent.

Expect the first menus to be rooted in Ghanaian references from Akwasi's expertise and heritage, and to grow as he and Tatale develop the concept and experience.



SECRET LOCATION SUPPER CLUB

Monday 17th May 2021

19.00-22.30

Sandra
Omari



**MENSA
PLATES AND
FRIENDS**
PRESENTS...
TATALE



As Akwasi develops Tatale's identity - ahead of it's mortar and bricks home - he will be hosting 'Tatale' dinners through his Mensa Plates and Friends supperclub. The menu from 17 May 2021, at James Cochran's 12:51.

A Concept by Akwasi Brenya-Mensa.

Telling Contemporary Pan-African Stories through Food, Art and Culture.

HIBISCUS PUÑETAZO HIBISCUS TE HELADO

In 2018 I visited Mexico for the first time to record a critically acclaimed Mixtape with NAAFI and Gaika. What I had known only as Tea, met Tequila.

HARD DOUGH MALT BUTTER ONION ASH

My favourite bread as a child, I broke the toaster with it once and got grounded. Malt is the undisputed flavor of African Hall Party refreshment.

OMO TUO NKATEKWAN SESAME

Loosely translated from Ghanaian dialect Twi, "Omo Tuo" is Rice Gun, my brothers and I giggled around the table when Maame or Mama served it.

MANGO CUCUMBER GRAIN SALAD

The colours in this salad represent those of my origin's National Flag, God Bless our Homeland Ghana!

TATALE SIGNATURE CHICKEN BURGER 2.0 JOLLOF COUSCOUS MUSHROOM BOWL CASSAVAS BRAVAS

My Aunt Grace Mary would eat shito on toast when visiting, as kids we thought it was weird. Now I sadly reflect on all the times I ate toast with just butter...

PLANTAIN CHEESECAKE PINEAPPLE TEQUILA SORBET

It doesn't matter how you pronounce it. (H)Enjoy.

Dinners announced on instagram
[@mensaplatesandfriends](https://www.instagram.com/mensaplatesandfriends)

The Music

To understand Akwasi, it is useful to start with his first love: music. At university Akwasi co-founded Premier Parties, which swiftly became a nation-wide business. At its height the weekly events had 5,000 people attending. Following the runaway success of these events, Akwasi launched a sister company, Cheese On Bread, to delve further into the alternative music scene. As Cheese On Bread was gaining popularity, grime and dubstep were quickly becoming a force in the underground scene and so the weekly club night also became an independent record label, championing emerging producers and artists from around the scene and attracting 400-600 people.

Akwasi began to make a name for himself in the music world and in 2016 he became manager for musician and multipath, GAIKA. After 2 years in music management, he next took on the role of tour manager for musician Flohio, which took him around the globe. Eating, exploration and engaging in conversations in cities around the world had a huge impact on his growing food career.



Tatale

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