

# Food fit for Royalty

BORN IN NIGERIA AND LIVING IN THE UK, MICHELIN STAR CHEF ADEJOKÉ BAKARE EPITOMISES THE HARMONIOUS FUSION OF WESTERN AND AFRICAN TASTE PALETTES

WORDS MONALISA MOLEFE



Being African is extraordinary, especially when one considers the depth of meaning of people's names and the intentions behind them. Each name is like a prophecy spoken over one's life every time it is uttered.

Take, for instance, Adejoké Bakare; in Yoruba, *Ajoke* means "the one to be celebrated", with the prefix "ade" signifying royalty. The combined meaning is "the one with a crown who's going to be feted."

Adejoké embodies the regal essence of her name, especially with the recognition of a Michelin star, which made her the UK's first Black female chef and the world's second to achieve this honour, bringing the essence of African – more specifically Nigerian – culinary heritage to the global forefront.

With women comprising less than 25 percent of professional chefs, and only six percent in leading Michelin-starred restaurants, Adejoké is breaking barriers and redefining culinary excellence. She's even been described as "one of the most blisteringly gifted and original chefs in the city" by journalist Jimi Famurewa in the *Evening Standard*.



Her restaurant name, Chishuru, also has a significant denotation, meaning 'to eat silently'. Less literally, it refers to the silence that falls over the table when the food is so good nobody wants to speak. I had the privilege of delving into Adejoké's insightful perspective on African symbolism, the essence of luxury, and the absorbing journey of her career.

TELL US THE STORY BEHIND CHISHURU'S LOGO.

I designed the logo myself. It's three Nsibidi characters, each denoting water. Nsibidi is a system of proto-writing [like hieroglyphics] developed by the Ekpe secret society from south-east Nigeria. The logo means three waters, symbolising the way I'm using Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa culinary traditions in my kitchen.

YOUR WEBSITE SAYS CHISHURU IS "NOT A FINE-DINING RESTAURANT". CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THIS?

My ambition was always that Chishuru should feel homely and welcoming – so many of the traditions of fine dining run against that. Also, since winning our Michelin star, we've had a small number of customers coming in with strange expectations – that we shouldn't play background music, or there should be a staff member constantly topping up your wine and water. Michelin recognised some years ago that you can get great food in informal settings, and you don't need to have linen tablecloths or a man in a golden grapes badge upselling you on wine to get a star.

WHERE DO YOU GET THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR DISHES? I was born and raised in Nigeria, but there's no such thing as 'Nigerian cuisine' – it's a huge country with many people and culinary traditions that cross borders. For example, you're more likely to find some northern Nigerian dishes in northern Ghana than southern Nigeria. My parents are Yoruba and Igbo respectively, and I grew up in a Hausa area. At Chishuru, you see elements of all those culinary traditions on our menu.

WOULD YOU SAY YOUR FOOD IS AUTHENTICALLY NIGERIAN? I'm not setting out to create an authentic version of the food of my heritage. I'm just trying to present a version of the dish in a London context with the right presentation and professional

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# from South Africa to South Place

THE BOUTIQUE LUXURY HOTEL IN LONDON'S VIBRANT EAST END IS A MIX OF TRADITIONAL CHIC AND CONTEMPORARY COOL

WORDS JARED RUTTENBERG

The UK capital is home to an endless array of hotels – my new favourite being the five-star South Place Hotel, a Central London establishment that fluently blends playfulness, business, and luxury. During the week, trendy suited Londoners enjoy the hotel spaces, and at the weekends the ambience slips into convivial cool.

South Place has a range of rooms, with the suites being the most sought-after. All offer the luxurious trimmings you'd expect, and the glamorous marble bathrooms and comfortable workspaces are brilliant touches.

The hotel falls under the London hospitality group D&D, which boasts

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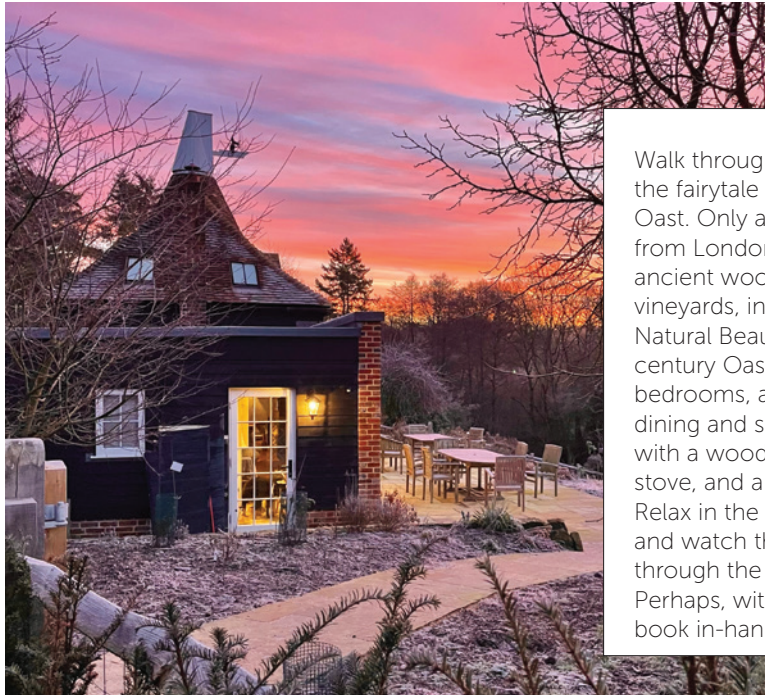
a string of iconic London eateries, one of them being South Place's Michelin-starred Angler. The seafood restaurant offers chic indoor dining and a top-floor terrace. For more casual dining, 3SP serves up hearty and enticing options.

There's also a dedicated spa sanctuary with steam, sauna, and treatment rooms, as well as a 24-hour gym for the fitness crew. Make sure to browse the website ahead of your stay – the hotel always has a stream of exciting events and dining deals on offer. Then of course,

key London landmarks such as the Spitalfields and Borough Market, London Bridge, Tower of London, and St Pauls are all within a pleasant 20 to 25-minute walk.

The best part? Possibly the delightfully entertaining General Manager Dean Culpan – a proud South African export who stands at the helm of this hotel. He's a raconteur with a bevy of stories up his sleeve – look out for the elegantly groomed gent and make sure to drop a 'howzit'.

■ [southplacehotel.com](https://southplacehotel.com)



STAY

Walk through the wardrobe and into the fairytale world of the Mousehall Oast. Only an hour's train ride from London, it is surrounded by ancient woodlands, hedgerows and vineyards, in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The 18th-century Oast features three en-suite bedrooms, an open-plan dining and sitting room with a wood-burning stove, and a kitchen. Relax in the copper bath, and watch the snow fall through the skylights. Perhaps, with a C.S Lewis book in-hand.



# the Chronicals of Mousehall

SYNONYMOUS WITH FINE WINE IN SOUTH AFRICA, THE JORDAN FAMILY HAS ACQUIRED AN ANCIENT FARMSTEAD IN THE UK'S EAST SUSSEX, AND 2024 MARKS THEIR SECOND CONSECUTIVE WINE HARVEST IN THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE...

WORDS MALU LAMBERT



Mousehall, the family-run distillery and winery in England, led by Gary and Kathy Jordan and run together with their daughter Christy, is a winery and distillery. The restored Mousehall Oast also offers accommodation – once upon a time, it was a traditional oast house used for drying out hops.

The sun is setting when we arrive, casting the already magical scene in an even more ethereal light. An ancient dawn redwood frames the manor. The tree is extremely rare, dating back to the Mesozoic period about 65-million years ago. From here, bright yellow daffodils lead the way. Mousehall dates back to 1086, and was named after the first traceable owner, James de Mouleshale, who inhabited it in the 11th century. Gary calls me over to show me symbols scratched into the oak beams propping up the crumbling bricks. Witches' marks to deter evil spirits. Sunken into a wall,

a moss-covered stone goblin leers through the centuries.

"It was neglected and overgrown," says Kathy of the property when they purchased it in 2017. Luckily, they'd had the same experience with their Stellenbosch estate. "We did the same with Jordan Wine Estate – we turned it around." The Jordans were drawn to this property for the promising terroir. Gary, a trained geologist, identified it as prime for viticulture with soils of Tunbridge Wells – sandstone, clay, chalk, and iron deposits.

The focus is on sustainability for both the wines and the spirits. The vineyard is planted to yield chardonnay, pinot noir, and meunier varieties. Eighteen Dorper sheep – a South African breed – mow between the rows as part of the regenerative farming plan, and nine beehives are on the farm.

We head off to take in some of the

12-acres, along a footpath that is said to have been an ancient drovers' route. The lane winds past the Tidebrook stream, after which the Jordans have named their maiden wine range, released this May. We pass the Oast house with the emblematic mouse on its cowl, stirring in the breeze. We're pursued by ducks as we make our way to the distillery and winery, which is situated in a converted barn. Next door to this is a botanical garden for their spirits.

"We often joked that Mousehall was like Narnia," shares Christy later. "We didn't realise that this was closer to the truth than we imagined." Some locals reached out to the family, providing information that C.S Lewis' publisher proofread all of the great author's books in the study at Mousehall, including *The Chronicles of Narnia*. "We are now certain Mousehall is a magical place." ■

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

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