

Season 2, Episode 2: Chef Oya Part 1

Candace:

Welcome to Black Girls Eating: A Conversation about Justice, Black Girl Magic, and Well Seasoned Food. We are, Black Girls Eating, and welcome to our podcast.

Tanorria:

Hey, you all.

Candace:

Welcome to Episode 2 of Black Girls Eating. Our guests today, legend.

Tanorria:

Legendary.

Candace:

Yeah.

Tanorria:

Legendary.

Candace:

Legendary.

Tanorria:

Official.

Candace:

I am honored to be in the same room. Do you hear me?

Tanorria:

As this legend.

Candace:

I just need you all to know this is literally a trifecta of Black Girl Magic. If you could feel the energy in this room.

Tanorria:

I have our group text titled; The Trilogy.

Candace:

Because we are. Because we are.

Tanorria:

Oh Candace, you've got to tell the people who we're talking to today.

Candace:

Well, you guys, Season 2 is bananas, as we've already told you, but today's episode, Season 2, I have the honor and the privilege of welcoming to our table, Chef Oya Woodruff, an amazing woman, chef creative, mom, daughter, sister-

Tanorria:

Goddess.

Candace:

... Philanthropist, goddess. We call her, The Trap Fairy Godmother. She is truly an amazing ... I get to say all of this because she is my BB. So, she is here today, and I just want to say, welcome, welcome, welcome.

Chef Oya:

Oh my God. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Tanorria:

She's blushing. Now, I don't think I've ever seen Oya blush.

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Candace:

I know, right?

Tanorria:

I loved it.

Chef Oya:

I giggled. All right. I am so incredibly grateful to be here. I always am grateful to sit at the table with you all two. I don't have anything else. It's wonderful.

Tanorria:

It is.

Chef Oya:

I love you all's energy, I love you all's minds and your creative forces, and I'm so glad to be here. I can't wait to see what we're going to talk about.

Candace:

Well, we love you too. And we're so thankful that you even said yes to come on our podcast, right?

Chef Oya:

Why wouldn't I say yes?

Candace:

Well, here's the thing, we know our podcast is great, and we know it's-

Chef Oya:

The bomb.

Candace:

... Amazing.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

But when people are, "Yeah, we'll come on," we're, "Really?"

Chef Oya:

Really?

Tanorria:

We crush, okay?

Candace:

So, the fact that you even said yes is truly... Thank you.

Chef Oya:

I wouldn't dream of saying anything, but yes.

Candace:

So, thank you.

Chef Oya:

Thank you, thank you.

Candace:

Come on. So, we started our podcast with an amazing question that makes you think, and our last guest said, "Y'all kind of like therapists," which we go deep around here.

Tanorria:

We go deep at Black Girls Eating, we go deep.

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Candace:

We go deep. We talk about what matters and what's important to Black women. I tell people, I'm, "It's a podcast that's gonna center Black women first and only, period."

Chef Oya:

This world should be centered on Black women-

Tanorria:

Because the world would not exist-

Chef Oya:

It wouldn't be here without us.

Tanorria:

... If it weren't for black women.

Chef Oya:

It wouldn't.

Candace:

And you know we're going to get hate mail for that, but I don't even care.

Chef Oya:

Bring it.

Candace:

I don't even care at this point.

Chef Oya:

Tell them to send it to me.

Tanorria:

Right.

Candace:

Right? [crosstalk 00:03:12].

Tanorria:

While you have time today, okay? [crosstalk 00:03:17].

Chef Oya:

Well, I was just-

Candace:

Yes she does.

Chef Oya:

Always.

Candace:

So, the question we love to start our podcast with is, when did you fall in love with food?

Chef Oya:

I was young, I was really young. I was little when I fell in love with food. I always tell the story of me standing on a kitchen chair-

Candace:

In the kitchen.

Chef Oya:

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... In the kitchen, in front of the sink, my daddy teaching me how to clean shrimp and catfish after the men in my family had gone fishing. So, I can't think of a time where I didn't love food. I've always been a little fat girl. I'm eating. I fell in love with food when I was little.

Tanorria:

Right, right.

Chef Oya:

After probably the first bite I ever had.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

Once they pulled me off of that formula and gave me salads, I'm sure I was in like swimwear. I'm sure, I'm quite positive that's when it was. As far as when I knew that this is something that I wanted to do with my life-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative)?

Chef Oya:

... It was still very early. I remember also watching Iron Chef-

Tanorria:

Yes.

Chef Oya:

... Late night-

Tanorria:

Yep.

Chef Oya:

... When I was eight, nine years old.

Candace:

When it wasn't Iron Chef America?

Chef Oya:

No!

Candace:

Iron Chef-

Tanorria:

The series.

Chef Oya:

The series, and they had subtitles. [crosstalk 00:04:53]. And Julia Child on TV.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

Yeah. So, I knew that I wanted to do something with food a long time ago. And I knew that I was good at it from a real early age too, and gratefully from the people in my family that always encouraged me to cook and be at the stove, and being around when they were cooking and all of that stuff he had. It was early from birth, baby-

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Tanorria:

Yeah. Yeah.

Chef Oya:

... In this thing.

Candace:

I feel there's something that gets instilled in us as Black people. That's one of those things that, you get your start in the kitchen because you are usually given a job, right?

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

You've got to fix something, you've got to pull something, you've got to set the table. All those things, that's our culture.

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

And it's so rich. I know, of course, other cultures do things too.

Chef Oya:

Every culture has certain aspects of their culture and just lives centered around food, every single one. I can't think of anything, and I said this a couple weeks ago to someone, I can't think of anything that brings humans together more-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... Than food, other than sex, but-

Candace:

You know what? I never considered that, but you're so right. You're so right.

Chef Oya:

Yeah. I always say that when there's a tragedy, the thing that everyone has in common is food and music.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tanorria:

Oh, absolutely. But you're right, sex do [crosstalk 00:06:34].

Chef Oya:

Yeah, for sure.

Tanorria:

Absolutely.

Candace:

Well, I loved that, like us, you started in the kitchen at a young age too. What would you say one of the first dishes that really let you put your niche on something, you were, "This, this is mine, and I know that I can make this well." What was one of that first meals?

Chef Oya:

Oh. Okay. So, I grew up in a household where my father was the better cook. My mother cooked more often, because as the woman and the mother of the household she cooked more often, but my father was the better cook. He experimented more. And he grew up in a household with my grandmother my

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great-grandmother that worked for big catering companies here in Indianapolis when he was very young. So, he had always had a larger ... He was able to reach food and see more food because they would just bring home all kinds of stuff from all these big fancy catering parties.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

So, he would always experiment and do more things in the kitchen than my mother would. But my mother would do quick things, Hamburger Helper-

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... Stuff like that. And one of the very first things that my mother taught me how to cook was just get a box of Hamburger Helper, right?

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tanorria:

Yep.

Chef Oya:

And to doctor it up to where I needed to doctor it up. And one day we didn't have a box, but we had beef and we had noodles-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... And we had seasonings in the cabinet.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

So, I figured it out. And I was, "Oh!" And it was, of course, tons better-

Candace:

Right? Right?

Chef Oya:

... Than that white ham box. And with that, I remember hearing my mother on the phone specifically saying, "Y'all, Toy made this, this dinner and this Hamburger Helper, but she made it from scratch." And she was, "I'll buy another box of Hamburger Helper again."

Candace:

Yeah. You have the [inaudible 00:08:45].

Chef Oya:

Yes. So, that was just one of the things from my earliest memory where I was, "Oh, okay, I can do this. I can take some raw ingredients and come up with something that is better than the original. Oh, okay-

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... I got it." Then, there was some goulash or whatever-

Candace:

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Oh yeah, that's so goulash.

Tanorria:

Oh yeah.

Chef Oya:

I remember the first time I made goulash following a recipe, and I was, "This is crap. Can I just like make it up next?"

Tanorria:

And that's really what it is. Honestly. It's just you making, just putting something together.

Chef Oya:

What you want, yeah.

Candace:

I love that.

Chef Oya:

Ain't nothing wrong with noodles and meat.

Candace:

And it's so funny because I immediately think of comfort when you said Hamburger Helper-

Chef Oya:

Yes.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

Because that sustained me-

Chef Oya:

For sure.

Candace:

... That sustained me as a broke college student, because it was a buck 25. That time some ground beef was so cheap-

Chef Oya:

So cheap.

Tanorria:

Super cheap.

Candace:

And you could even get some good ground Sirloin back in [crosstalk 00:09:41]. So, you put that in there, and man. I love that you did it from scratch. I love that. I love that. So, tell us more about your food philosophy. You are a chef and you have restaurants and you do things with food, so tell us what your food philosophy comes from and what it is.

Chef Oya:

I'm not sure that I've ever even thought about that that deeply as far as the philosophy is concerned. I'm just really into things that are delicious-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

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... And made with integrity, and things that are well-seasoned, and things that just make folks smile and bring comfort and bring joy to folks. That's just that, that's one of the reasons why food is so important to me is because you can connect through to people in such an incredible way-

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

... When you cook for them. That's how I love on folks-

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... Is to cook. I make something in a very small portion at home just for my family, and if I got a little left over, I'm putting it in the Tupperware container and dropping it off to you, dropping it off to one of my neighbors around the corner, just to say, "Ooh, I made this and it's the bomb and I need somebody else to taste it other than my mom and my daughter, cause they not going appreciate it in the same way." [crosstalk 00:11:18]. They do though, they definitely do.

Tanorria:

It's something that is an experience, so when you make something you can share with someone who understands why you love food. When you were, "Baby, I made Mac and cheese and turned out great." She called me, "What are you doing? Where are you at," that I was ...

Candace:

Because the thing is, we've talked about this, she's, "I don't really do like soul food like that." She was, "I haven't really had a success story with mac and cheese. When she brought me that mac and cheese, like she brought it to ... No, I took something to her at The TRAP, and I was, "I'm on my way. I just, I'll just get it from you."

Tanorria:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Candace:

I think I found a spoon in the car.

Tanorria:

Because that's how we roll.

Candace:

And I ate it on the way home. Then, I was, "Hey, hey, this is a problem." I'm probably, "This is a problem." She's, "I'm so excited." But just to be able to share that with you was, when you were, "Hey, you know, I've got some proofs of my cookbook and I'm so excited to share that with you," that's the thing, to have that joy for someone else and their creativity-

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

... It just, it's beautiful, and I love that.

Chef Oya:

I get goosebumps-

Tanorria:

Yeah!

Chef Oya:

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... When I share. It just really just, I don't know, sends electric currents through my body when I'm able to share like some delicious stuff-

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

... With people. Can I curse?

Tanorria:

Yes.

Chef Oya:

Okay. I've listened to every episode and I'm definitely sure I've heard other people curse ...

Tanorria:

I have, right?

Chef Oya:

OK.

Tanorria:

One of the things that I feel connects the three of us so well is that we all have a heart of service. And that is the whole up of your restaurant.

Chef Oya:

It is.

Tanorria:

So, explain that for the listeners.

Chef Oya:

So, my restaurant, The TRAP has a three or four fold manifest with regard to its name itself. As Black folks we know when we say we trapping, we know what we're doing.

Candace:

Right.

Chef Oya:

Now, it's a colloquial term that we use for just working or out here getting the job done.

Candace:

Right.

Chef Oya:

But you know trap has the Southern drug connotations and all of that stuff, and my restaurant is located in the heart of the hood here in Gangsterville USA, on the east side of Indianapolis. So, there's that. Then, of course, it's a seafood restaurant, so you can catch seafood in a trap-

Candace:

Right.

Chef Oya:

... That when you taste it, it traps you and enraptures you in a certain way when you get the Buttah in the Bae-

Candace:

It traps you in your chair because you can't go nowhere-

Chef Oya:

It does.

Candace:

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... Till you get a whole towel.

Chef Oya:

Right, right.

Tanorria:

Absolutely.

Candace:

Pull back.

Chef Oya:

Also, T-R-A-P stands for Toward Restoring Food Access to the People. And my thing is feeding people that don't necessarily have the best access to fresh and delicious food all the time. There are several folks in the neighborhood that know that when they see my purple door open or the window open, that if they are hungry and they cannot pay, then they can come and eat, and I think that's the least that I can do for being able to take care of my family and my employees is feed folks that are hungry and need to eat. So, that's where we are.

Tanorria:

And it's so incredible to hear you say that when I read stories about school districts who pull funding for kids to not be able to get free lunch or-

Candace:

When they're giving them peanut butter and jelly sandwiches?

Tanorria:

Oh.

Candace:

Yeah. It's-

Chef Oya:

And can't eat a regular lunch?

Candace:

Can't eat a regular lunch. It's, at what point is feeding someone ... Is that too much? Also, that's where we draw the line and making sure that people have food, it blows my mind how we can be in this nation. We call ourselves one of the most advanced, one of the wealthiest nations, yet we have people that are hungry.

Chef Oya:

This nation makes-

Candace:

We have children that go hungry, families that go hungry every single day.

Chef Oya:

Every single day.

Candace:

It makes you sick to even think about.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

This nation makes you think that having the basic quality food is a privilege-

Tanorria:

Yeah.

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Chef Oya:

... And not a right.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

It is my birthright to eat.

Candace:

To eat.

Tanorria:

To eat.

Chef Oya:

And to eat good quality food. To eat well.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

Absolute birthright. And it shouldn't take all of that for folks to be able to eat.

Tanorria:

Right.

Chef Oya:

It just shouldn't.

Candace:

It shouldn't. It shouldn't be like pulling teeth to be able to just enjoy a good meal, or if you see someone in the grocery store and they're paying with EBT or SNAP, or they're at the Farmer's Market and they're paying with EBT or SNAP, don't roll your eyes at them.

Chef Oya:

Yes. So?

Candace:

So? And?

Chef Oya:

How is that bothering you?

Candace:

Because the problem is, you should roll your eyes about the fact that they should actually to even have to have that-

Chef Oya:

Exactly.

Candace:

... That's the problem.

Chef Oya:

That's the issue.

Candace:

Not them getting the good food.

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Chef Oya:

Exactly.

Candace:

I don't understand, where's the disconnect there?

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

But you're absolutely right, because I think about all the neighborhoods in Indy that are starting to get gentrified-

Tanorria:

Yep.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

... And have already been gentrified. I can actually think about college, when I drive down ... I call it [crosstalk 00:16:34].

Tanorria:

Grocery stores as well. That's what I call it.

Candace:

Or you can take 38th Street from one end of the city to the next, and you can count how many grocery stores that you're going to find.

Chef Oya:

Not enough. Barely any.

Candace:

There's four.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

There's four.

Chef Oya:

I'm going down, yeah.

Candace:

Yeah. Actual-

Chef Oya:

I'm following that baby trail.

Candace:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

They're coming up because they closed [inaudible 00:16:59] right there.

Candace:

Yeah.

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Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

Come up a little bit further. There used to be a grocery store right there on 38th in, what, Molar right there.

Candace:

Yeah. That Meyer's still there, Pike Plaza, but yeah-

Chef Oya:

That don't count. That's not on ... Well, okay, that counts-

Candace:

Because you can get to it from 38th Street-

Chef Oya:

Because you get to it from right on 38th Street.

Candace:

But, yeah.

Chef Oya:

Then, go on further, there's a couple of international stores right there.

Tanorria:

Patel Serago-

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tanorria:

I was just in Patel's the other day.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

Its insane.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

It's insane to think about. It's insane to think about that we have to have a conversation about people having-

Chef Oya:

Access.

Candace:

... Access to food, yet you are building restaurants all up against-

Chef Oya:

Over-priced restaurants.

Candace:

... Over price restaurants. High rise-

Tanorria:

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Car wash.

Candace:

Yeah. Car washers-

Tanorria:

On a one way street.

Candace:

On a one way street.

Chef Oya:

Oh!

Candace:

And ... Yeah. So, not only are you screwing up the flow of traffic, but you've got bright neon lights in the middle of the night.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

It's insane. It bothers me. It bothers me. And I just, I can't fathom what the world's going to look like in 20 years when my child can drive to a restaurant, to a grocery store by herself. It makes me sick.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

It makes me sick to stomach.

Tanorria:

Nothing provides peace of mind like a well-stocked pantry. Staples +5: 100 Simple Recipes to Make the Most of Your Pantry, is my first cookbook. And I am so excited to get it in your hands. Learn how to make the most of the things in your pantry that we take for granted. Get Staples +5 at tanorriastaple.com/books. Order multiple copies and get some swag.

Candace:

Is your food bland, tasteless, unseasoned? Well, let me get you BE seasoned. Season your food well with Food.Love.Tog seasoning. Order online at foodlovetalk.com/spicelanger. Happy eating friends.

Tanorria:

So, how do you feel about being a Black woman in food in Indy? What challenges have you overcome with that?

Chef Oya:

Ooh, a lot. It's really interesting when I think about what it looks like right now as opposed to what it looked like when I started.

Tanorria:

Oh, yeah, because you're coming up on six years-

Chef Oya:

Five years. Coming up on the fifth year anniversary.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

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In January.

Candace:

Wow.

Chef Oya:

And I remember starting, and I remember it being such a whirlwind, and everybody was, "Ooh, this Black woman out here doing this seafood and she got seasonings and sauces and ... What's going on?" You know what I mean? [crosstalk 00:19:43]. Her line is around the corner and all of this stuff. And it was hot and crazy and interesting and popular. Now, still hot and crazy, interesting and popular, however, there's this rash of new Black folks, new Black women, that are in the industry right now and just absolutely killing it.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

And we talk about giving ourselves due credit-

Candace:

... Yeah.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... But I really am proud to have been able to, and this isn't to say that there wasn't Black women doing it to this level before me here in the city, because I'm sure there were a couple-

Candace:

Yeah.

Tanorria:

Oh yeah.

Chef Oya:

Yeah. But I came through busting and quite loudly, just to say it frank. So, it's been really incredible to sit at tables I never thought I would sit at or even be invited to, and even to turn down certain tables because [inaudible 00:20:56] I don't sit at everybody's. I don't want to and will not.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

I don't know, it's been such an interesting thing. It's been a whirlwind.

Tanorria:

Oh, I'm sure, I'm sure.

Chef Oya:

It's been a whirlwind. And I don't know, I'm just grateful to have folks in my corner and folks like you all around me all the time that can keep me grounded when I'm, "Oh, this thing happened and I'm so sick at the way people treat me."

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

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And you all can be, "Shame, sis."

Candace:

Yeah, I mean-

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

To be frank, it's hard as hell.

Chef Oya:

It is.

Candace:

It's hard as hell to be a Black woman in any industry, but especially in the food industry-

Chef Oya:

Over-writes and ram bodies, old White men that think that they know what they're doing.

Candace:

I mean-

Chef Oya:

From recipes from our great-grandmothers-

Tanorria:

Because they spent six months in Asia and now they know how to make Asian food?

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tanorria:

It's just, it's mind-

Chef Oya:

I went on a pilgrimage to Alabama.

Tanorria:

Oh? So, you went on an extended vacation because of your privilege, and now you're going to come back, "Oh ..." All right.

Chef Oya:

Or, girl, they'll go, like you said, an extended vacation, they'll be in Morocco for six weeks and come back and open up a Moroccan restaurant-

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... And I can probably name a couple different food ways that White folks have intruded upon.

Candace:

Oh, absolutely.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

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Candace:

We can talk about Whole in The Hog right now. We can talk about that because it's so funny because I had been watching this whole situation unfold with how they were going to have this show. Of course, again, you are listening to like a trilogy of women in the food industry, and so we have our ear to the ground about this stuff.

Chef Oya:

Right.

Candace:

So, when this all came about, I knew. I was, "This is going to wreck people."

Tanorria:

Uh-huh (affirmative).

Candace:

They are not going to even understand the magnitude of what they're about to-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

... Because it will disrupt everything that they've ever learned about food.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

And it takes us ripping back the veil and being honest about the culture of America and what's ingrained in her soil.

Tanorria:

Yep.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Our blood.

Candace:

And our blood, sweat, and tears. You all don't understand, there's a reason why rice was a commodity.

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

Rice, you think, oh, it's just a little white grain. Oh baby, no. Let me tell you why that rice was sought out and brought here to be grown. You all don't understand. And I said this on Twitter and people were pissed. I said, "Y'all going to pay homage. And until my dying breath, I will make sure that you do."

Chef Oya:

You have to. They have to. And you have to say it, and just like you said, to your dying breath, to my dying day, I will say the same thing. Pay homage to my grandmothers, pay homage to these elder women that are still out here doing it. Pay homage to our ancestors that toiled and soiled through everything to bring us what we have today. You know what I mean?

Candace:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

And to even feed White folks, and not just food, we were feeding White folks from our teets.

Candace:

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Yeah.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

When they're mammas were too busy and too cute to feed them breast milk, you know what I'm saying?

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Chef Oya:

So, everything that you all eat, you wouldn't be able to eat without Black women.

Tanorria:

Yeah-

Chef Oya:

Let's just understand that.

Candace:

It's just a fact, and I know it's ugly to hear-

Tanorria:

No, it's not.

Candace:

For other people, not for us, because we know the truth. And the thing is, just like about the Tulsa massacre, right?

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative)?

Candace:

People are, "Well, I didn't hear about that." There's so many other things you haven't heard about either-

Tanorria:

What a friend we have in Google. Geesh!

Candace:

True. True. It's amazing. It's amazing when you think about all the ways we've made and all the ways we've paid and-

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

... And how our food is, again, just, it's the source. It's the source of all those things that you can hang your hat upon.

Tanorria:

Absolutely. And I feel that doesn't get lost on us because we have been held accountable to pay homage and to respect the ancestors and recognize their contributions. But it gets lost on White culture, because I can't even say other cultures. Other cultures are responsible and held accountable as well.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Tanorria:

But it gets lost on White culture because no one is holding them accountable for paying homage to anything, because they think they're superior.

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Candace:

Yeah.

Tanorria:

So, why do they have to spend time paying homage to anything?

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

Yeah. It's something that's ingrained into their brains. And I say this all the time, the notion of White supremacy has damaged White folks just as much-

Tanorria:

Yes.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... If not more-

Tanorria:

Yes.

Chef Oya:

... Than it has damaged us as a people, simply because it's giving you all this false sense of superiority. A false and fake notion that you're better or your ways or your habits and choices have been better or are any better than any other culture or people's ways.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

And it's really an amalgamation of a lot of stuff that you all just go and have picked up through colonization.

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. I just told a friend, actually a White friend. She was questioning why a White man can be so comfortable and not want more. Why don't you want more? I said, "Because they think that everyone's striving to them."

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

So, why do they need to strive for more?

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

They think that their life, their lifestyle-

Chef Oya:

Is the epitome.

Candace:

... What they're doing, is what everybody else is shooting for.

Tanorria:

Right, right.

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Candace:

And that they are the benchmark and that they are the check mark and that they ... It's mind boggling to me, it's mind boggling to me, to be honest, but ... Yeah.

Chef Oya:

The benchmark phrase is really funny to me because when I think about when White folks eat my food, which my food is for everybody, baby. If you're going to come and pay for it then you can have it, unless, somehow, I say you can't eat.

Candace:

Right.

Chef Oya:

And there have been a couple of people in these five years that I've been, "Get the hell away from my window." For certain. But when I think about when people taste my food and how ... And sometimes I eat my food and I know that it's delicious. I know that the Trap Buttah and Youngbae together make a dynamite-

Tanorria:

Magic.

Chef Oya:

... Magical, incredible pair. I know that, and I'm-

Tanorria:

Flavor explosion.

Chef Oya:

It is, it really is. And I won't eat it for a couple weeks just because I'd be busy or doing other stuff or just won't stop and just have, but then when I have a tray-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative)?

Chef Oya:

And the way I make my tray is different than everybody else because I know exactly what I like on what.

Candace:

Yep.

Chef Oya:

So-

Tanorria:

Okay, the next time I'm coming, I'm going to be, "I want the tray Oya style."

Chef Oya:

That's what I tell people sometimes to get.

Tanorria:

It's a hard-

Chef Oya:

My crew will roll their eyes because it takes a little longer to prepare, but they'll do it.

Tanorria:

She knows my order too-

Chef Oya:

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Yeah, for sure.

Tanorria:

... I don't even have to ... I can just wave and she'll, "Okay."

Chef Oya:

For absolute certainty. But when we talk about benchmarks and when we talk about expectations and all of this, when folks taste my food and they're, "Where did this even come from, like, how does this even happen," with regards to flavors and how it builds up and how you could put the same exact sauce and seasoning on all of the different components of the food but they're still going to hit differently.

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

Then, I go and I'll eat at another establishment with a White chef. And no, it ain't got to be flattered in Trap Buttah already for me to think something tastes good, of course.

Candace:

Right.

Chef Oya:

But it'll be barely salted-

Tanorria:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Chef Oya:

... And people will rave about it, and it'll be put on lists of best foods, and I'm just, "Where are we as a society to continue to give accolades to average ass shit?"

Tanorria:

Because mediocre White men are made to think that they can do anything.

Chef Oya:

It is incredible to me how something so mediocre ... And I'm not going to name no names or say no-

Candace:

She's going to name names when we go off air-

Chef Oya:

Damn right.

Candace:

This is a nice segue for our Patreon. We're starting a Patreon [crosstalk 00:30:32]. You all want some behind the scenes-

Chef Oya:

Behind the scenes.

Candace:

... Behind the scenes chats-

Chef Oya:

The dirt, the teets.

Candace:

The dirt and the teet, yes. So, just keep your ears peeled for that.

Tanorria:

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Oya just gave me goosebumps.

Candace:

Yeah.

Tanorria:

"Just dedicate me a 20 minute segment." "You've got it." You've got it.

Chef Oya:

I will come with a-

Candace:

Yo, our sound engineer's having a field day today.

Chef Oya:

... I will come with a list of things for you, don't even go here and try it. So, if Oya did that, so you ain't got to go and do that.

Candace:

It real. It's crazy, because Tanorria and I were invited to an outing, and I got a dish and she got a dish-

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

... And she was, "I'm gonna get this cause I know you're gonna get this, so we can swap and taste."

Chef Oya:

Yeah, we do that.

Candace:

Yeah, we all do that, right?

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

Yeah, because you and I have been to several restaurants together-

Chef Oya:

Girl.

Candace:

... And here's the thing, I specifically ordered this dish because it's something that I make all the time.

And the first thing I went for was the grain, because for me, I can tell a lot about your cooking when I

taste your grain and the flavor the grain, because if the grain is bland, nine times out 10, everything else is going to be bland.

Tanorria:

Or the accompaniment is going to be over-seasoned to overcompensate-

Chef Oya:

Overcompensate for your lack of salt and lack of flavor in your stock that you're cooking-

Candace:

And in my mind, when I saw the dish, I immediately knew. I was, "Oh! Those are going to be, those are going to be bland." And I was so sad, because it's so weird, when you are a seasoner and a Spice Slinger, your expectations of seasoned food are high.

Tanorria:

They got to be high.

Candace:

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Because you think, "Oh yeah, people know about seasoning ..." There's been this whole explosion of people talking about seasoning now-

Tanorria:

Mm-mm (negative).

Chef Oya:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Candace:

... So, of course, usually you've got Tap of the Brown, you've got all these different people that are coming up with their own seasonings, that's great, I love that. Like the Spice Sweet and BC, I can't wait to go meet her and just hug her [crosstalk 00:32:27], because I think what she's doing is amazing-

Chef Oya:

We've got food at home.

Candace:

Yeah. We've got food at home. [Crosstalk 00:32:31]. She would text me ... We were talking on Instagram, I'm, "Yep girl, we got food at home."

Tanorria:

Right, you're right.

Candace:

We got chicken at home. But it makes me so mad, because you have these dishes that are on these best food lists, and I'm just, "How?"

Tanorria:

And you're supposed to be classically trained.

Candace:

Not only that, but you've got all this money behind you.

Tanorria:

Yeah. Oh-

Chef Oya:

And you can't even put no salt in your water.

Candace:

You can't even salt your liquid?

Chef Oya:

Mm-mm (negative).

Tanorria:

You can't afford to not use water and use some stock instead?

Candace:

It just, it blows-

Chef Oya:

That's why I just said salt and water because that's the baseline.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

That's the baseline. It blows me away. And she saw my face, I saw her face, and we both were just ...

Tanorria:

I saw her face and I said, "What was it cooked in?" She said, "Water," I said, "I know."

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Candace:

It made me so sad. But I see that all the time. And the thing is, some of the best cooks I know will never set foot into a restaurant, because they don't want ... Some of the best non classically trained-

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

... Which, that's a whole other thing too, we put so much basis on people having to have classic training-

Tanorria:

Because education is rooted in White supremacy.

Candace:

... Again.

Chef Oya:

Again.

Candace:

Because everything I ever learned about cooking and being a clean cook and how to wash your hands after cooking, I didn't learn that in somebody's Home Ed class-

Tanorria:

You learned it at home.

Candace:

I learned it at home. Yes, education, I'm a huge purveyor of education when it fits you. Of course, I want my kid to be educated and be smart, but education does not only have to happen in a classroom.

Chef Oya:

The expectations of education and the credentials behind it and all of the credibility and highlights around education are all intended to make White people shine, because it is more difficult access for Brown people.

Candace:

Yeah.

Tanorria:

Yep.

Chef Oya:

So, let's paint this beautiful picture around education, not recognizing that Brown people get educated in a completely different way and end up being way smarter than you-

Candace:

And-

Tanorria:

Way smarter.

Candace:

And no matter what, even if we have the ... You can put a Brown person here and a White person here who would have the same credentials, and yet we're still paid three times less. So, the math ain't math [inaudible 00:34:58]. So, is it education or is it not? You know what I always say is that, Oochie Wally is above my [crosstalk 00:35:02]. Which one is it? Somebody help me make it make sense.

Tanorria:

Yeah.

Candace:

Season 2, Episode 2: Chef Oya Part 1

Make it make sense.

Chef Oya:

Yeah.

Candace:

It's wild, it is wild. It's wild.

Tanorria:

Black Girls Eating: The Podcast is sound engineered and produced by David McKissick. It's recorded at Nexus Impact Center, Creative Suite. Follow Black Girls Eating: The Podcast on Instagram at [blackgirlseating](#). Follow Tanorria at [tanorriastable](#). Follow Candace at [foodLovetog](#). Thank you for listening.

Tanorria:

(Silence)