



NAIROBI STREET FOOD

IT'S TASTY AND CHEAP

By Sonali Sumaria

All major cities around the world have well known street food that people especially travel to have. Nairobi's street food is nothing less. With options for everyone, it's impossible to ever go hungry. No matter how early you start off to how late you stay up - if you are on the right street, you will get mouth-watering food.



Nairobi's street food caters to all whether you are vegetarian or a serial meat eater. With so many budget-friendly options, thousands of people stop by the local vendors at all times be it for breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack or after a heavy night out. Some of the major places for the best street food include downtown, markets, residential areas, industrial areas, and shopping centres.



MAHINDI CHOMA AND MUHOGO

There has probably not been anyone that hasn't enjoyed this snack. Mahindi Choma is white maize and Muhogo is fresh cassava. Both are roasted on charcoal and topped with salt, red chili powder and lemon. There really is no better combination. Usually eaten in the evenings as Nairobians leave their busy workdays and head home. Some spots also serve crispy cassava crisps and 'madafu - coconut water drank straight from the coconut'.

Boiled white maize (Mahindi Chemsha) is also quite commonly available with different vendors.



SMOKIE PASUA AND MAYAI KACHUMBARI

This has to be one of the most popular street food snacks seen on almost every corner of Nairobi. Smokie Pasua is a smoked sausage that is cut into half and served with kachumbari - a simple onion, green chili and tomato salad. The same cart will also serve Mayai Kachumbari which is boiled egg - also cut in half and stuffed with kachumbari. The seller usually begins their day by 5am and can go up to the late hours of the night.





MUTURA

This is the famous Kenyan traditional 'sausage', every vendor prepares them in their own unique way. The sausage is stomach intestines, stuffed with different types of meat, blood and spices i.e. ginger, garlic, and cilantro (coriander). The meat is either boiled or fried and then stuffed into the intestines and sealed at the end. After which it is grilled on a low heat as customers pass by and place their orders. Once grilled, they are sliced into small pieces and are served with kachumbari.



CHAPATIS AND CHAI

One of the simplest combinations and yet the best tasting. Chapati is a flat pancake like bread, that is made of whole wheat flour, kneaded into a soft dough, freshly rolled out and cooked on a griddle. The chapatis are mostly ordered with a cup of fresh hot tea - an amazing pot of fresh Kenyan tea leaves, milk and a questionable amount of sugar. There are several kibandas (roadside stall) around Nairobi specially making chapatis and chai.

Another type of drink commonly sold is the 'black tea' that is a mix of coffee powder, lemon, ginger and sugar. This is mostly sold in the evenings, popular with workers doing night shifts.



JONNY ONE ONE SAMOSAS AND MANDAZIS

Mandazi is another favourite snack that every Kenyan has grown up having. They are made of white flour dough, cut into small triangle or square shaped pieces and deep fried until puffy and light. They taste slightly sweet and are eaten alone or with a hot cup of tea.

Samosa is triangle-shaped dough filled with either vegetables or minced meat and fried. These are also available among most vendors. Many Kenyans also have the two together. By opening the mandazi, stuffing it with the samosa and adding some fresh kachumbari. The dish is a burst of different flavours - sweetness from the mandazi and the chili from the samosa.





CHIPS MWITU

If there is one thing all Kenyans have in common - it's the love for potatoes! The most popular form is of course chips. Available in most streets around Nairobi, they are hard to miss out. Some of the condiments they are eaten with are a special chili sauce, vinegar, salt, tamarind sauce and kachumbari too. Another popular potato snack is bhajias! They are potato fritters served with a special chutney, made with tomatoes, onions, and green chilies.



NYAMA CHOMA

This is grilled beef or mutton that has been marinated for several hours in spices. It is grilled on open fire on the roads mostly next to clubs and restaurants. Some places also use chicken. This is mostly served with ugali. For those who like softer meat, these vendors, also prepare well-boiled meat - this can be goat head or legs.

MSHIKAKIS

Mshikakis are small spicy pieces of either chicken, beef, goat, or mutton on skewers. They are marinated with herbs and spices. Some also mix them with vegetables cubes such as carrots and capsicums. They are freshly grilled on the streets and are usually accompanied with sauces or dips. They are usually enjoyed in the evenings and the vendors are mostly found at night outside clubs.



Even though Nairobi has several amazing restaurants, it's sometimes worth exploring the streets for an authentic Swahili taste. Nairobi is a melting point of different cultures, and this is reflected by the street food. As you travel beyond Nairobi, each city has its own specialities and traditional dishes. Next time you spot a kibanda or food cart, don't hesitate to give them a try.

