



PROJECTING NIGERIA'S SOFT POWER THROUGH CULINARY DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT

Culinary diplomacy, also referred to as gastrodiploamacy, involves using cuisine to communicate culture in a public diplomacy context. While many countries are using their cuisines to project power around the world, African countries are not yet exploiting culinary diplomacy as a tool of international relations, despite the fact that the continent can boast of myriad of cuisines peculiar to its various cultures. This paper examines the concept of culinary diplomacy and the role cuisines play in diplomacy. It advocates that Nigeria (and by extension, other African countries) should embrace the exporting of the country's culinary heritage in an effort to project its image, thereby encouraging economic investment and trade, and engaging with members of the international community on a cultural and personal level.

INTRODUCTION

Soft power, according to Nye (2008), is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion or payment. While hard power is the ability to coerce (through military or economic means), soft power is the means to attract and persuade. A country's soft power rests on its resources of cultures, values, and policies. Factors that feed soft power include culture, education, arts, print and visual media, film, poetry, literature, architecture, higher education (universities, research centres, and so on.), non-governmental organizations, science and technology, the capacity for innovation, tourism, platforms for economic cooperation and diplomacy (Kalin, 2012). Soft power emerges as a combination of these elements and gives us an idea about a country's cultural richness and social capital.

Public diplomacy, described by Tuch (1990) as a government's way of communicating with foreign publics to achieve an understanding for its country's ideas, cultures, institutions and national policies activities, is one of soft power's key instruments. Public diplomacy activities are conducted within two main frameworks: "State-to-public," and "public-to-public." State-to-public activities aim to explain the state's policies and activities through the use of official tools and channels to the public. In public-to-public activities, however, civil elements such as NGOs, research centres, public opinion polls, media, opinion leaders, universities, exchange programs, associations and foundations are employed (Kalin, 2012). Bátorá (2006: 55) writes that "for small and medium-sized states, public diplomacy represents an opportunity to gain influence and shape international agenda in ways that go beyond their limited hard power resources".

One of the components of public diplomacy is culinary diplomacy, a type of cultural diplomacy. Culinary diplomacy, also often referred to as gastrodiploamacy, involves using food to communicate culture in a public diplomacy context. The basic premise of culinary diplomacy is that "the easiest way to win hearts and minds is through the stomach". The term has been in use since the early 2000s, and has been popularized by the work of public diplomacy scholars Paul Rockower and Sam Chapple-Sokol. Food is a universally vital part of our lives, representing history, traditions, and culture. Each of us relies on food not only to survive, but to comfort ourselves, communicate with others, and connects us to our forebears (Chapple-Sokol, 2013).

Although, culinary diplomacy is a relatively new field in the realm of public diplomacy, the idea itself can be traced back to the ancient Romans, who often made peace with their enemies over a good meal. Historians confirm that the historic importance of food goes back to the time of the Greeks and Romans, when opponents used food to resolve and mend disputes (Patel, 2014). Brillat Savarin, in 1825, notes the meal as a powerful instrument in the process of negotiation in business and politics. He wrote:

In men not far removed from a state of nature, it is well known that all important affairs are discussed at their feasts. Amid their festivals savages decide on war and peace .

... this was the origin of political gastronomy. Entertainments have become governmental measures, and the fate of nations is decided on in a banquet (Savarin, 1825: 80).

Recognizing the growing importance of food in foreign policy around the world, countries like Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, Peru, Japan, and the United States Official have established government-sponsored culinary diplomacy programmes. Food's universal importance makes culinary diplomacy effective everywhere in the world, which is why it is being adopted in many areas and at many levels of engagement. From the summit down, the practice of culinary diplomacy has proven to be successful, and will hopefully continue to do so. This paper, therefore, examines the concept of culinary diplomacy and the role cuisines (a collection of dishes and meals that mark a distinct culture) play in diplomacy. It advocates that Nigeria should embrace the exporting of the country's culinary heritage in an effort to project its image, encourage economic investment and trade, and engage on a cultural and personal level with members of the international community.

The Concept of Culinary Diplomacy

Chapple-sokol (2013) defines culinary diplomacy as “the use of food in cuisine as an instrument to create cross-cultural understanding in the hopes of improving interactions in cooperation.” In other words, culinary diplomacy refers to a government's use of food to promote its power; this takes form in official diplomatic dinners, the promotion of a country's cuisines and food products abroad, to name a few examples.

The term “culinary diplomacy” and “gastrodiplomacy” are often used interchangeably by scholars like Wolf, 2006 and Chapple-sokol, 2013), some like Rockower (2012a) differentiate the terms. For instance, Rockower (2012a), distinguished culinary diplomacy as being confined to formal interactions between Heads of State and in official diplomatic functions, while gastrodiplomacy is a tool of outreach for governments to foreign publics. He added that gastrodiplomacy would also include people-to-people connections through the act of breaking bread. However, Chapple-sokol insists that the two terms (culinary diplomacy and gastrodiplomacy) describe one and the same overall idea, with different terminologies. This paper aligns with Chapple-sokol to use the two terms as connoting the same idea. Nonetheless, culinary diplomacy and gastro diplomacy have been distinguished from food diplomacy, which entails the use of food aid and food relief in the period of crisis or catastrophe. While food diplomacy can aid a nation's public diplomacy image, it is not a holistic use of cuisine as an avenue to communicate culture through public diplomacy.

According to Chapple-sokol (2013), culinary diplomacy consists of two distinct but related facets: public and private culinary diplomacy. He stated:

Public culinary diplomacy falls under the heading of public diplomacy, and more specifically, cultural diplomacy. It is worth noting that public culinary diplomacy is exemplified by governmental outreach programmes like those undertaken by the Thai and South Korean governments. Private culinary diplomacy, on the other hand, occurs behind closed doors. Commensality, from the Latin for the act of sitting at the table together, is vital to diplomatic discussion. While public dialogue and large conferences can lead to decision-making, the best negotiation and conversation often happens away from the public eye, over a meal or a drink (Chapple-sokol, 2013: 162).

In both public and private practice of culinary diplomacy, the non-verbal communication of food and the physical closeness of commensality create a powerful locus that is centred on the space in which food is shared. Everything is in play: formal or informal; the seating arrangement; the type, origin and quality of foods; who is there and who is not (Chapple-sokol, 2013). Public culinary diplomacy involves added dimensions of nation-branding and outreach, but the theory remains at the level of commensality; at its basest, culinary diplomacy occurs when individuals — whether they are private citizens, diplomats, or heads of state — share food and drink (Chapple-sokol, 2013).

Culinary Diplomacy: The Asian Example

Food can be symbolised as a sterile product, or an item of consumption that has historical and cultural symbolism. The latter of these two symbolic conceptualisations (the cultural-symbolic definition of food), is the primary understanding of food when it is used as an issue to carry an actor's soft power (Reynolds, 2012). It is this symbolism (and values) attached to the food—more than the food itself—that enables soft food-power to be successful. This is because of food's (and food cultures) symbolic value; being able to carry messages and norms as the food travels, giving rise to culinary diplomacy.

As noted by Boykins (2016), one of the most notable forms of culinary diplomacy used by countries worldwide is the state dinner. Throughout history, ancient princes of Asia and medieval European patricians alike have convened in celebration of extravagant epicurism. However, the modern state dinner tradition began in 1874 when U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant hosted King David Kalakaua of the Kingdom of Sandwich Islands, now known as Hawaii, at the White House. Ever since, India, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and many other countries have hosted foreign heads of state for lavish state dinners (Boykins, 2016).

Today, the use of cooking and food as a tool of diplomacy expands beyond state dinners. Culinary diplomacy has, in recent years, become something of a trend among nations wanting to showcase their cuisines, and their cultures, to the world. Cuisine, or a local food culture, reflects the ways in which a particular social group thinks about food and their cooking style. It includes the basic foodstuffs available locally, as well as typical flavours and eating habits characteristic of a specific cultural group. The politics of cuisine extends beyond the kitchen, and includes the efforts of local, regional or national governments to shape the development of the culinary field (Farrer, 2015). Wilson (2011) pointed out that food can function as a non-threatening way to gain favour and make a connection with a foreign audience.

Many Asian governments are particularly conscious of national culinary soft power. One of the pioneering countries in the incorporation of culinary diplomacy is Thailand. The Thai government funded a multi-year campaign, the Global Thai Programme, to raise awareness of its food culture by offering citizens living outside the country funds to open Thai restaurants and gain access to Thai food products for import. Between 2002 and 2013, the number of Thai restaurants globally increased from 5,500 to 10,000. By creating a Thai brand, the government made an exotic cuisine part of a more everyday food experience that people in the West could appreciate.

Apart from the government initiatives, others have taken their own initiatives to promote Thai culture, such as Thai Senator Mechai Viravaidya, who owns several restaurants worldwide titled "Cabbages and Condoms", which promotes birth control and assist in the fight against the spreading of AIDS. These efforts can be interpreted as successful, considering the overall increase in Thailand's popularity as a tourist and migration destination. In data made available by the Department of Tourism of Thailand, the country experienced a significant growth in arrivals from all countries between 2002 and 2012. Arrivals increased from 10.8 million in 2002 to 14.5 million in 2007, and more than doubled in a decade to 22.35 million in 2012. In 2013 arrivals jumped to 26.55 million, while 2014 saw a decrease in visitors to 24.78 million. 2015 saw another leap in arrivals up to 29.88 million visitors. After the 5 million plus increase in 2015, 2016 saw further, but less prominent increase in arrivals to 32.58 million (Vanhaleweyk, 2016). The incorporation of Thai restaurants into daily life in other nations can also be seen as a positive result for the national brand of Thailand, and with the increase in the visibility of Thai culture one can conclude that Thailand's 'net worth' on a global plain has increased in the last decade (Strugar, 2016).

Another nation that is promoting their public image through food is Taiwan. In what is tagged "Diplomacy by Dim Sum", Taiwan attempts to subtly differentiate itself from its more influential and more powerful neighbour, China (Moskin, 2009). Taiwan is a unique case, as it is not a widely recognized country, but a disputed territory and de facto state. As such, traditional diplomacy is not as effective, for Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and therefore does not have access to many means of conventional relations. As a result, Taiwan has

worked to reach out via non-traditional means, including the use of culinary diplomacy. Former Taiwanese President, Ma Ying-Jeou started a US\$ 30 million programme to initiate a 'diplomatic drive to differentiate the country from its giant and sometimes antagonistic neighbour, China, and to end the perception that Taiwan is little more than the mass-production workshop of the world'. The campaign included the government hosting international cooking competitions as well as sending Taiwanese chefs to contests abroad in an attempt to highlight the aspects of the cuisine that were different from the international view of 'Chinese' food (Chapple-sokol, 2013). The government also established a 'culinary think tank' to work with restaurants abroad to promote Taiwanese food. Also, in November 2011, Taiwan's Government Information Office unveiled a multilingual website dedicated to promoting the island's food culture and cuisine.

Malaysia is also a country that is deploying the tool of culinary diplomacy. In 2006, it embarked on a campaign to brand Malaysia as a centre for halal food within the Muslim world. In 2010, Malaysia kicked off 'Malaysian Kitchen for the World' to create awareness about Malaysian cuisine and recipes. The campaign has been carried out by the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) to promote Malaysian cuisine globally, with heavy emphasis on the United States and United Kingdom. The Malaysian government also set up Malaysian night markets in London, New York City, and Los Angeles (Rockower, 2012b).

Through what is called 'Kimchi Diplomacy', South Korea is also another country promoting culinary diplomacy. In 2009, the South Korean First Lady, Lee Myung-bak prepared a variety of traditional dishes for American veterans of the Korean War that took place in the 1950's (Moskin, 2009). Her goal was to introduce an alternative view of South Korea to people that didn't experience it in the best light: "I wanted to give them a new taste of Korea as something positive and delicious," she said in an interview (speaking through an interpreter), her first with a member of the Western news media since her husband took office the year before. "From the war, they do not have many pleasant food memories" (Moskin, 2009). The First Lady also proceeded to have similar affairs with the Japanese prime minister and his wife, Miyuki Hatoyama, where Mrs Hatoyama proceeded to help prepare kimchi, stating that she "wanted to experience making kimchi with bare hands".

The utilization of food in order to change a country's image, no matter how small of an audience is being addressed, can result in mass turning of opinion through example. In addition to this initiative the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries set aside ten million dollars "to spend in 2009, including grants and scholarships for South Koreans to travel and attend culinary school" (Moskin, 2009). The South Korean government was confident of its being next in line to open restaurants abroad and bring foods such as tteokbokki, bibimbap and bulgogi to the international culinary world. The initiatives instigated the 'Hallyu' ("the Korean Wave") in the United States, increasing their cuisine's popularity and overall awareness in Americans as to all that South Korea has to offer (Struger, 2016). Whether through addressing the wider population, or simply through social interaction with other political figures, the South Korean First Lady managed to adapt a social aspect of her culture in order to open dialogue between nations and solidify relations, proving the real value of gastronomy in the political and social spheres (Strugar, 2016).

Japan also provides a good example of a successful state-led culinary politics, which can be traced to a larger push for nation branding and cultural diplomacy (Farrer, 2015). Beginning in 2003, the prime minister's office established a new set of policies and working groups focusing on the promotion of cultural diplomacy, cultural "content" exports, and the "Japan brand." Subsequently, in July 2005, the cabinet's Cultural Diplomacy Promotion Working Group (2005) identified culinary culture as one of the important contents of cultural diplomacy along with pop culture and fashion, arguing that such cultural exports have a synergistic influence on the formation of positive public opinion abroad about Japan. In April 2009, the government-created Japan Brand Liaison Group (2009) issued a report that included Japanese food culture along with other cultural industries as forms of "soft power industries." Significantly, the report remarks, "Promoters of the Japan brand do not have to be Japanese, rather, it is important to encourage people from Asia and other parts of the world to become the promoters".

On December 5, 2013, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced its recognition of Japanese cuisine as an Intangible Cultural Heritage (Demetriou, 2013). The official designation is “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year.” The Japanese application to UNESCO defines washoku in socio-cultural terms, as sets of practices and values that link food ways to social relationships, affirm connections to the environment and appreciation of nature and seasons, and express deep cultural affinities for rituals and patterns of communal life.

Culinary Diplomacy in other Parts of the World

Similarly, in other parts of the world, the project of culinary diplomacy is on the front burners. In the United States of America, the U.S. State Department launched a culinary diplomacy programme, titled “Diplomatic Culinary Partnership: Setting the Table for Diplomacy” in 2012 (Rockower, 2012a). The new State Department Culinary Diplomacy Initiative has two stated objectives:

- Engage formal diplomacy by collaborating with renowned chefs and other culinary leaders to utilize food preparation, presentation and overall dining experience in thoughtful, meaningful ways to engage foreign leaders at official State Department functions.
- Foster cross-cultural exchange by enlisting prominent chefs to participate in public diplomacy programs that use the shared experience of food to engage foreign audiences and bring people of varied backgrounds and cultural identities together

As part of its protocol office, the United States of America uses food to illustrate the diversity of American cuisine by inviting famous chefs from around the country to cook for visiting world leaders. The US is also sending some of its finest chefs to cook at overseas embassies to highlight the country’s culinary talent. Apart from culinary nation-branding initiatives, there are other practical applications of culinary diplomacy. The Obama White House and administration have engaged actively with food initiatives as well as appointing the first American ‘Culinary Ambassador’ (Chapple-sokol, 2013). First Lady Michelle Obama led an outreach drive to both the American people and abroad with a campaign highlighting the importance of healthy and local food. Mrs Obama oversaw the planting of a garden at the White House that feeds the family and provides fruit and vegetables for state dinners, as well as installing a beehive to produce White House honey.

The White House kitchen — led by Executive Chef Cristeta Comerford, Pastry Chef Bill Yosses and the Obama-picked assistant Sam Kass — led the effort for both domestic and international culinary diplomacy. State dinners were an especially key moment for outreach. According to Yosses, the kitchen staff has a ‘very strategic system’ to go about planning for such an event. Starting months in advance, the team identifies which fruits and vegetables from the garden will be in season at the time of the dinner. They then consult with the various departments involved in the planning, including the State Department, to establish what tone is desired for the occasion. The meal is then constructed to reflect that tone — whether it is casual and comfortable or formal and proper. Yosses also pointed out that some of the input comes from the guests themselves, but that final menu planning is at the discretion of the kitchen. Comerford says that it is important to give a ‘nod’ to the guest’s home cuisine, but that the ‘menu has to be reflective of American cuisine and hospitality’ (Chapple-sokol, 2013: 178). Each state dinner is therefore a combination of gesture and national pride — outreach to the other while maintaining a strong sense of self is the key to culinary diplomacy.

Sweden is also not left out in the practice of culinary diplomacy. When Sweden chaired the European Union in 2001, the catering was meticulously prepared (Tellström et al., 2003). *Hospitality without lavishness* was the keyword. The goal was to communicate knowledge of Sweden’s values and products to important European decision makers and their entourage of international journalists and business people through food experiences based on Swedish raw materials, local menus and meal formats. The thought behind this initiative was that food and food culture communicate as well as other media: papers, pictures, books, theatre, movies, radio, TV, exhibitions and so on, and that a food linked to a certain custom and tradition will

obtain higher prices on the market than anonymous products. The plan was laid in cooperation with representatives of agriculture, the food industry, fisheries, the public sector, politicians, chefs and various kinds of artists and scientists. It was their task to take care that the meals expressed authenticity and avoided the kind of anonymous international hotel-chain meals one meets all over the globe. The result was a lot of meals in 12 cities on four price levels and a big success (Jacobsen, 2008).

Essentially, for a country to display itself on the strength of its food, it requires a national cuisine(s) upon which to establish itself. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's seminal work about national cuisines finds that cookbooks play a fundamental role in their creation, especially in a post-colonial context such as modern India (Appadurai, 1988). Thus, once a national cuisine has become established, it can be exploited as a facet of a nation's brand. Ingredients, cooking techniques and culinary philosophies can be advertised by chefs and restaurants and marketed to complement a national outreach campaign (Chapple-sokol, 2013). A nation invokes the power of its cuisine as the tool of the national brand, so that when foreigners take a bite of food, they recognize it as belonging to the country of origin, and thereby strengthen their associations with that country. Also, at the highest levels, culinary diplomacy works to create a table atmosphere that will produce a fruitful meeting of world leaders.

In real terms, African countries are not yet exploiting culinary diplomacy as a tool of international relations despite the fact that the countries can boast of myriad of cuisines peculiar to its various cultures. For instance, the book, *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine* by James McCann (2009) offers an ample exploration of cuisines in Africa. These cuisines need to be showcased to the world in order to boost the image of the countries in Africa.

How can Nigeria Utilize Culinary Diplomacy?

Nigeria is a multicultural country with over 500 ethno-linguistic groups. These ethnic groups employ their specific cultural traits and practices as distinguishing features from other ethnic groups. The three largest ethnic groups are the Hausa-Fulani who are predominant in the North, the Igbo who are predominant in the South-East, and the Yoruba who are predominant in the South-West. Nigerian cuisines, which consist of cultural dishes or food items from various ethnic groups, are part of the cultural heritage of the country. Nigerian indigenous cuisines are natural, with all their nutritional values intact; original and direct from their various sources, unlike most Western foods, which are canned therefore, containing a lot of preservative elements, which could have harmful effects on the body systems (Ayakoroma, 2012).

Nigerian food embellishes a rich blend of traditionally African carbohydrates such as Yam and Cassava as well as vegetable soups made from native green leaves (Consulate General, n.d.). Praised by Nigerians for the strength it gives, garri is a powdered cassava grain that can be readily eaten as a meal and is quite cheap. Yam is often fried in oil or pounded to make delicacy like yam pottage. Nigerian beans, quite different from green peas, is widely popular. Meat is also popular and Nigerian Suya, a barbecue like method of roasting meat, is a well-known delicacy. Bush meat, meat from wild game like deer and giraffes, is also popular. Fermented palm product is used to make traditional liquor and palm wine.

Nigeria has a wide variety of cuisines. Nigerian foods are spicy mostly in the western and southern part of the country. Some of their traditional dishes are *eba*, *pounded yam (iyan)*, *fufu*, *amala*, *ikokore*, *ebiripo*, *ojojo*, with soups like *okra*, *ogbono*, *egusi* and so on. *Fura da nono* (yogurt and fresh milk produced by Fulani pastoralists), is a major food in parts of the North as well as *tuwo* (meal made from mashed corn or mashed rice). Nigerian cuisines also include indigenous salads like *abacha* (popularly known as African Salad), which is common with the Igbos and mostly used for big occasions. It is prepared with dried shredded cassava, *ugba* (fermented oil beans), garden eggs, *akan* (potash), palm oil, dried fish and cooked cow skin (*ponmo*). The country's food culture also include snacks and sweets like *kuli-kuli* (groundnuts cakes), *ipekere* (plantain chips), *kokoro* (fried dry snack made from corn or garri), *dundun* (roasted or deep fried slices of yam in palm or vegetables oil), *kpokpo-garri* (dried fried

fermented cassava snack), common among the South-South people of the country (Ayakoroma, 2012).

A major cuisine popular in Nigeria, especially in the Southern part is the Jollof rice. Oderinde (2015) describes it as:

a dish made with rice, tomatoes, tomato paste, onions, scotch bonnet peppers, salt, spices and vegetable oil. Whatever variations are available, these ingredients are a must in the dish. The long grain rice we use to cook this dish is not even indigenous

to

us. It is imported into our shores from Asia.

The dish is not only popular in Nigeria, some West African countries like Ghana, Gambia and Senegal do not joke with it. In fact, there is an on-going supremacy battle about Nigerian Jollof rice versus Ghana Jollof rice. Nigeria also has a variety of the Jollof rice referred to as "Party Jollof". The Jollof is such a serious business in the sub region that August 22 is set aside every year to celebrate it (Ayibiowu, 2016; Sokoh, 2016).

There have been efforts within the country to promote local cuisines. For instance, the government of Oyo State organized a three day 'Amala Fiesta' in 2016 with the theme 'From the Farm to the Table' to promote the local food culture and specifically showcase the benefits of Amala and related agricultural produce. According to the Oyo State Commissioner for Information, Culture and Tourism, Toye Arulogun,

Amala represents the homogenous nature of our people. It represents the culture of our people, health of our people and wealth of our people. Indeed, Amala is the number one food brand of the Yoruba race to the extent that even the politics of the South-West was named "Amala Politics." Amala fiesta, also known as "Ajodun Oka", is not just a food and cultural tourism event but a celebration of the Yoruba food culture and Oyo State's foremost delicacy which has become a national pride with international presence and worldwide acceptance (Ogunesan, 2016).

Similarly, in 2016, the "One Lagos Food Festival" was held in Lagos State to showcase the rich diversity in Nigerian Cuisine and delicacies thereby creating awareness on Nigerian's rich food culture.

What does Nigeria stands to gain from deploying culinary diplomacy? Culinary diplomacy can become a tool for creating a strong image and good reputation for the country. By showcasing and promoting Nigerian food worldwide, it will create awareness of the country's culinary heritage. As noted by Koleosho (2013), the high levels of importation and exportation of local Nigerian food ingredients across continents is an indication that Nigerian food is gaining popularity around the world. This may be due, in part, to the increasing number of Nigerians living in Diaspora and an equally increasing number of foreign nationals taking up employment in Nigeria in light of the oil boom leading to inter-cultural exchanges. Culinary discovery of tastes and flavours is being made by many from Asia, Europe and the Americas who live and work in Nigeria.

Like most of the Asian countries, the Nigerian Government can also provide support for Nigerians who are willing to open restaurants abroad. If people abroad are more aware and more interested in Nigerian cuisine, demand for Nigerian food will increase. Essentially, therefore, with its massive variety of national cuisines, Nigeria has a huge potential to use these delicacies as tools for diplomacy.

Conclusion

Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton once proclaimed that "food is the oldest form of diplomacy" (Rockower, 2012a). Countries use food as a part of their efforts to promote their cultures, build their images, globalize their food industries, attract foreign tourists, and build relations with foreign publics (Pham, 2013). The actors are no longer limited to state politicians and their chefs but include food corporations, celebrity chefs, tourist agencies, public relations firms, public diplomacy practitioners, TV cooking shows, and social media. When a nation's culinary heritage is combined with an excellent cuisine, there is also the possibility of getting the attention of the international community. For instance, Japan and France have had their



cuisines designated intangible cultural heritages by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). More recently Japan, India, and Indonesia have leveraged their foods as part of their national brands as a means to promote tourism (Bestor, 2014)

Culinary diplomacy resides perfectly within the sphere of public and cultural diplomacy projects. It is a kind of diplomacy that involves building the reputation of one's country through promoting one's national cuisine both to appeal to foreign leaders as well as populations. The argument is that people are more likely to relate to other cultures in terms of its cuisine, resulting in economic and political gains.

In essence, utilizing foods and showcasing favourite cuisines is, thus, a powerful tool of diplomacy. Nigeria, therefore, can improve its national image by using the country's cuisines as a means to enhance international perceptions and promote itself on the global stage.

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