



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

Interviewee: Peggy Kankongie
Interviewer: Meredith E. Abarca
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In this interview, Peggy Kankonde shares her knowledge of Congolese foods, which many she learned through her in-laws. Peggy married an oncologist from the Congo. When they moved to El Paso in 2010, they open a cultural center, African Fiesta Café (AFC) to share and promote cultural awareness about the 54 nations of Africa, but in particular about the music, dress (made with 6 yards of wax colored prints), and food traditions from the Congo Democratic Republic. At the African Fiesta Café (2018 to 2020), a person could have a blouse, skirt, or jacket made while having lunch and listening or playing music. While the AFC menu includes a number of meats based items, Peggy does point out that for a large percentage of people in the Congo Democratic Republic meat is not a common source of protein. At AFC, however, with regularity there is ox tail, beef casserole, goat, beef liver, and chicken. Since Peggy lived in the southern part of France for many years and this is an area with a large number of immigrants from northern Africa, Morocco, Naegleria, Tajine, she also has some Moroccan dishes on the menu like chicken tajine. Fufu, says Peggy “is like the tortilla of the Congo. No meal goes without it.” At AFC it’s prepared with a combination of casaba flour and white corn mill finely ground. Fufu, like tortillas, is quite filling and it releases its caloric value slowly because it’s made up of complex starches. Depending on region and family traditions, the fufu can be made with different flours, including from plantain. Semolina is often used to make fufu—but mostly on north Africa. Peggy makes connections between semolina pastries that look just like Mexican *polvorones*. Another item Peggy introduce us to is honey beans, cook no different the Mexican pinto of Caribbean back beans, except that these one always tastes sweet. Peggy gets all ingredients of African origin

(or African brand names) from a small African grocery store located on El Paso's east side on Montana Ave, "Top F African Story & Fashion." As Peggy continues to share food practices of the Congo Democratic Republic and North Africa, Morocco in particular, she addresses the consumption of rice and plantain—in poor communities, these are items consumed infrequently. In addition to food practices, Peggy also mentions a popular soft drink called Vitalo, which tastes like grenadine which tastes very similar to pomegranate. Vitalo as a soft drink competes with the global Coca-Cola option. A local beer in ODR is Zimba. While, Peggy, a non-African woman, has learned to make all the foods on the menu at AFC, a chef, Lauren Banza, from the Congo Democratic Republic who has lived in Zambia and Tanzania, does the cooking at AFC.

Length of interview 39:48

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