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GETTING FISHY AT GGABA

By Arthur M. Katabalwa

I do not normally eat fish. I have not eaten fish since 1994. It has been for personal reasons. However, on occasions I have been convinced to try it. When I have, it has to be very dry or smoked. I think this has to do with the smell. Well, you would think then that one like me would avoid Ggaba landing site like a plague. The place is the fish-eating headquarters of Kampala.

Kampala has suburbs which are linked to certain foods. On Gayaza Road, near Kiteikka, there is a roadside market where roasted goat meat is the norm.

Some people like to think that Nyanama, near Kabusu, is the place to go and eat *mpuuta* (Nile perch). There are parts of Ntinda which are known for pork. I think it is more of a personal choice. But a certain consensus is growing that Ggaba is the place to go and eat fish fresh off the boats.

Ggaba is located about seven miles to the south of Kampala city in Makindye division. The usual route is through Kabalagala and Kansanga, which can sometimes have absolutely atrocious traffic, although one can go through Salaama Road and Munyonyo. It is well-served by public transport taxis and the road is also good.

Ggaba derives its name from the Luganda word for 'serve' and it is easy to see why. There is a bountiful supply of fresh fish. The market at the landing site is teeming with food from the islands. There is also a lot of firewood and lake sand which is brought in on the boats.

Eating fish at Ggaba is a hands-on affair. If you want to use a fork and knife, you will be very disappointed. The bones of Tilapia fish are best hand-picked. More often than not, the fish is served with chips. It is normal to choose the fresh fish from a rack before it is fried. It is, therefore, acceptable to have a longer waiting time for your order to arrive.

Esther Kasule, the

manager of KK Resort Beach in Ggaba, said as their fish is brought on the day it would be eaten, they advise their customers to wait for some time before it is served.

At the landing site, most of the fish is deep fried, without any seasoning. However, the more upmarket restaurants in the area are known to add some spices to give it more taste.

Every day, numerous boats come from the lake laden with tonnes of fish which are sold at a different wholesale markets further down from the landing site. Mzee "Gabunga" Musisi, the chairman of the landing site, is a decades-long veteran of the fishing industry. He reiterated that while they have had problems in the past with unscrupulous fishermen bringing in young stock, the Government has instituted a programme where all stock fished and brought in is of the required standards. He said they are fighting the use of substandard nets as it threatens the lake with overfishing.

Ggaba landing site is lined with a number of open air restaurants which can seat about 400 people. It mainly operates at night. The locals who operate these restaurants are mainly worried about the high taxes from the Government. They also worry about "investors".

Emmanuel Musinguzi, a resident, expressed his worries. "We would like to develop this area and take it to another level, but we know that if that is done, many of us will be priced out."

His business partner, Allan Ndiwalana, concurs. "We do not have the money to invest further in this place. The taxes are too high."

Whichever way one may want their fish, a visit to Ggaba landing site is worth it. The town is like any other in Uganda, with loads of shops selling textiles, shoes and music. There are a number of fuel stations, and the occasional street hawkers. There is an almost impossible hum of activity as trucks are loaded and unloaded with goods for the islands. But the gem is hidden at the bottom of the town, right next to the landing site with the shimmering waters of Lake Victoria.

