

FridayXtra / Totally Random

I am the life of the party. I bring vibes – Tony Otoa

Ever wondered what Tony Otoa does away from the office suits, limelight and Execo meetings? Who he would invite on his boys trip or which song he secretly dances to while on the grill? We get personal and a little nosy with the UNOC head of corporate affairs; a man who loves to barbecue, travel and live life. A random chat about random things in his life.

BY GLORIA HAGUMA

First off, happy belated birthday. Any chance we are getting invited to a BBQ celebration?

Thank you. I will be celebrating twice this year; one in the summer and another in December, so there is a high chance you could score yourself an invite.

If Iuseke was your new hustle, who would be your first target?

Definitely a very good friend who also just turned 45 and is about to have his NSSF paid out. I will not mention names, but he will know when he reads this. *Hahaha.*

What is more satisfying; a perfectly timed media statement or that first bite of well-smoked meat?

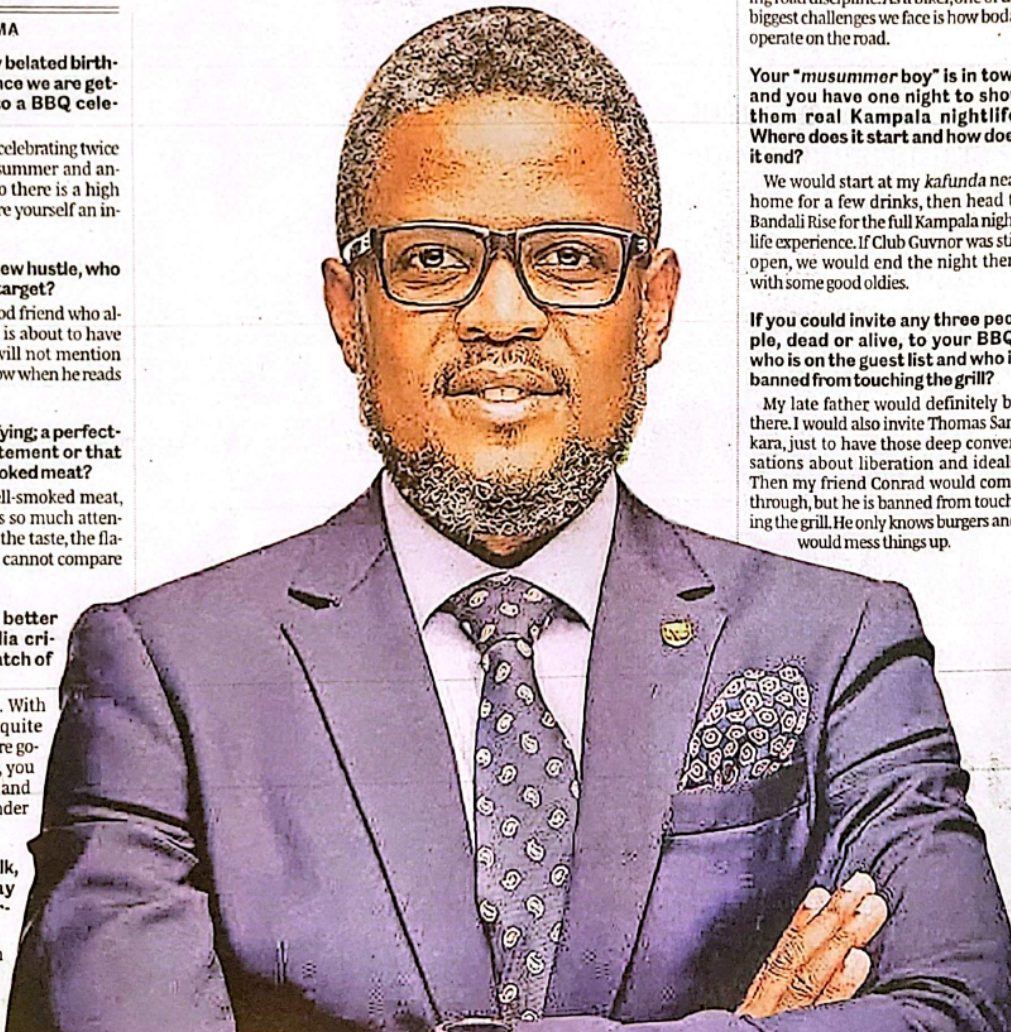
The first bite of well-smoked meat, hands down. There is so much attention that goes into it, the taste, the flavours, the juices. That cannot compare to a media statement.

Be honest, are you better at handling a media crisis or rescuing a batch of overcooked ribs?

Rescuing the ribs. With media, you never quite know where things are going. But with a grill, you can manage the fire and bring things back under control.

If your grill could talk, what would it say about your leadership style?

It would say I am a meticulous, servant-style leader. I like doing things



was assigned to cover a briefing at Bank of Uganda. I was not an Economics reporter, and I struggled to get the right soundbyte from the late Governor Emmanuel Mutebile. I ended up crafting a story that was not quite what he had said, and it ran on the radio the whole day. I realised later that I probably was not the best fit for covering this.

One song that must play while you grill?

Murder She Wrote by Chaka Demus and Pliers.

You are given one month to take over Balimwozo's seat. What is the first "small small" Kampala problem you would fix?

Organising boda bodas and improving road discipline. As a biker, one of the biggest challenges we face is how bodas operate on the road.

Your "musummer boy" is in town and you have one night to show them real Kampala nightlife. Where does it start and how does it end?

We would start at my *kafunda* near home for a few drinks, then head to Bandali Rise for the full Kampala nightlife experience. If Club Guvnor was still open, we would end the night there with some good oldies.

If you could invite any three people, dead or alive, to your BBQ, who is on the guest list and who is banned from touching the grill?

My late father would definitely be there. I would also invite Thomas Sankara, just to have those deep conversations about liberation and ideals. Then my friend Conrad would come through, but he is banned from touching the grill. He only knows burgers and would mess things up.

Which comes first in your mind: the perfect headline or the perfect marinade?

Professionally, the perfect headline. For instance, a few weeks ago, we were recognised as the best-performing Ministry Department Agency, and that was a big moment that was worth celebrating.

Have you ever used your cooking skills to impress a girl?

Of course. My wife.

One thing your colleagues would be surprised to learn about you in an interview.

I actually DJ. It is something I do occasionally in my free time.

Diplomats, executives, media, a stubborn piece of brisket; who is the toughest audience?

The media. They will keep asking questions, and you have to keep responding.

Ugandans vs Kenyans on X: Who has sharper clapbacks?

Kenyans, definitely. It is like they are always loaded and ready.

You are planning the ultimate boys trip. Which MP are you inviting for the vibes?

I would go with former MP Odoor Otto. He is controversial but very intelligent, so it would be a mix of arguments and good vibes.

When men say "let's see how the week goes," is that genuine or just a polite "no"?

It is 50/50. Sometimes it is about juggling responsibilities, but other times it is a softer way of saying no without disappointing someone.

What is your biggest X pet peeve?

People who troll, especially anything that leans toward violence. I just scroll past.

One Gen Z habit you would fully embrace?

Travel. They are young, free, and love exploring. I would definitely be part of that, and I still am. I am actually planning to get back on the road in my campervan soon.

In your friend group, are you the planner, the late one, or the one who disappears when the bill comes?

I am the life of the party. I bring the vibes.

Pick one: A fully paid road trip across Africa with your boys or a cook-off with Bobby Flay?

A road trip with my boys, definitely. I would still get to do plenty of cooking along the way, just with more people.