

glimpse into how local beauty brands are positioning them-

Speaking during the event, Managing Director Patricia Tino,

can women are increasingly defining it for themselves.

Telling Egypt's story beyond the pyramids

BY EDGAR R. BATTE

The evening drew a colourful mix of ambassadors, members of the diplomatic corps, representatives from the private sector and cultural institutions such as Alliance Française and the French Chamber of Commerce, all gathered at Sheraton Kampala Hotel for an Egyptian Iftar as they opened the Francophonie Month celebrations organised by the French Embassy.

It was one of those evenings where conversation came easily. The aroma of Egyptian dishes drifted through the hall as people waited to break the fast. But if the dinner offered guests a taste of Egypt, it was the remarks by His Excellency Monzer Selim, Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Uganda, that gave the evening its most memorable moments.

Amb. Selim began with a simple observation. "When people hear about Egypt," he said, "the first thing that comes to mind is the pyramids, the Sphinx, Luxor, Aswan, the Nile cruises. Very few think about Egyptian food." That, he explained, was the very reason the embassy chose to host a culinary evening. "Our gastronomy is very rich," he said.

"The Francophonie offers us a platform to show a different side of Egypt." For Selim, food tells a story that history books sometimes overlook. Egypt, he explained, has always been a meeting point of cultures from Mediterrane-

an to African, Middle Eastern, Arab and Coptic influences layered over an ancient civilisation that stretches back thousands of years.

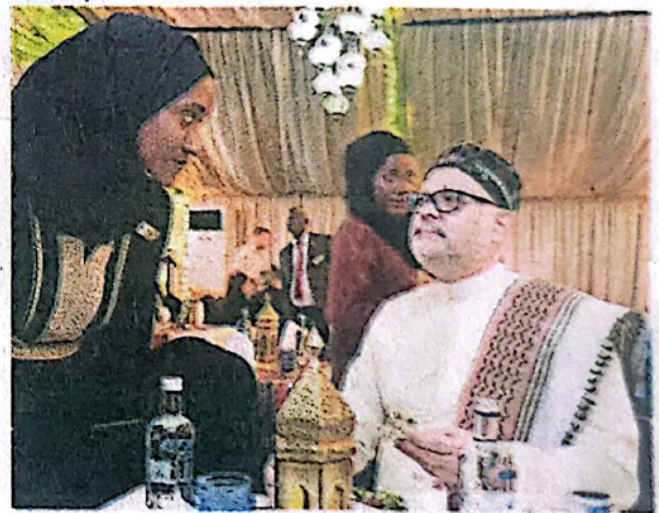
Those influences have shaped the country's cuisine in remarkable ways. "Many people say the United States is the melting pot of the world," Amb. Selim said with a smile.

"But Egypt is the real melting pot." The dishes served during the evening reflected that layered history. Some carried Mediterranean influences. Others spoke of the Middle East or North Africa. Together, they offered guests a glimpse into how Egypt's culture has evolved over centuries.

Among them was moussaka, a dish many guests recognised from Mediterranean cuisine but which has found its own place in Egyptian kitchens. Yet Selim's remarks also carried humour. One famous Egyptian delicacy, he told guests, had not made it to Kampala. The dish, known as fesikh, is a fermented salted fish believed to date back to ancient Egyptian times.

Its strong smell, he joked, would probably not have survived airport security. "They would consider it a biological bomb," he said, prompting laughter across the room.

Guests, he added, would have to travel to Egypt to try it. Earlier, welcoming guests, Jean-Philippe Bittencourt, the general manager of Sheraton Kampala Hotel, explained that the Egyptian Iftar was the first in a series of culinary evenings planned during Francophonie Month.



Sheraton General Manager Jean-Philippe Bittencourt (R) with a guest during the dinner. PHOTO/EDGAR R. BATTE