YAKOBO'S: THE LAST OF THE REAL PORK JOINTS



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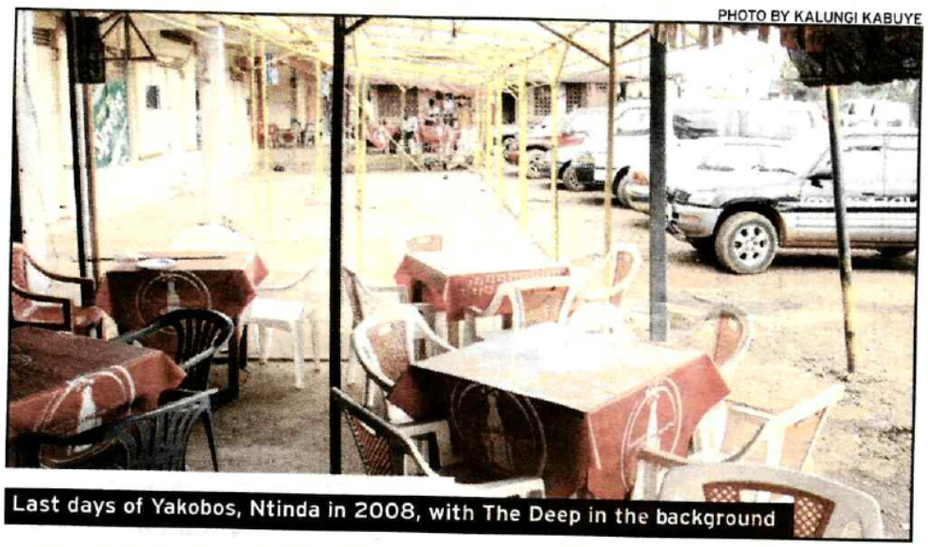

Last days of Yakobos, Ntinda in 2008, with The Deep in the background

Last month we heard that the owner of the Yakobo Pork Joint in Ntinda, Tonny Kizito, had passed away. Although I had gone to Yakobo's many times, both when it was in Ntinda and when it moved to Kigoowa, I did not know Kizito personally. But with his passing, yet another chapter in Uganda's lifestyle has come to an end.

Yakobo's was the last of several 'pork joints' that ruled Kampala for many years, when they were at the centre of social life. Many were the dates that took place at pork joints, relationships started and at times ended at pork joints.

Each Kampala suburb had a main pork joint where the faithful gathered, and were often known by its owners. Some of the main ones included Nicodemus in Nakulabye, Joy's Joint in Wandegeya, Cave Down and Yakobo's in Ntinda. Later, Kiwa's in Kiwatule also rose to prominence.

Pork joints emerged in the early 2000s, at the tail end of *bufundas*. While *bufundas* were largely shops where people sat and drank beer, pork joints did away with the shop bit. The main thing was always pork. It probably needs a PhD dissertation to explain what really led to the growth of pork joints, but grow and prosper they did.

Just like South Africans swear by their braais, and the Kenyans will shoot you if you tried to stop them eating *nyama choma* in off-licence bars, Ugandans swear by pork. Someone tried to put a middle-class spin to it, that '... the smoky, caramelised flavour and tender texture of roasted pork' is what drives many Ugandans to the pork joints. 'Carame...' what?

There was nothing middle class about the original pork joints. Joy's Joint, for example, was behind a row of shops in Wandegeya, opposite the Post Office (I bet some people don't know there is a Post Office in Wandegeya). In its early days, one had to step very carefully to get there, but all those fancy cars parked outside indicated you were not the only one seeking the good thing.

The clientele was mostly from the western region, where Joy also came from. Part of the attraction were the extended hips common to females from that part of the country. Unfortunately, the original Joy died in a motor accident some years ago, and the place is now more of a main stream restaurant, although it retains the name.

I must have gone to Nicodemus only once, when I was editor of the *City Beat* magazine and we were trying to get them to advertise with us. But something about Nakulabye has never sat well with me, and I didn't go back. But many people swore by the pork. I'm not sure if the original Nicodemus still lives, or if the 'joint' still exists.

Which brings me to Yakobo's. It had its heydays in the 2000s, where Fraine Supermarket is now. There used to be a row of *bufundas*, and at the end was The Deep, a popular bar. Yakobo's was squeezed in between The Deep and another nameless *kafunda*.

I was a regular at The Deep, and the only times I would venture into Yakobo's was when either The Deep waitress had pissed me off, or they did not have cold beer. It is said that the original owner was a Yakobo Turyatemba, but at that time it was owned by a *mzungu* called Nicholas, and a friend of mine, a Kenyan we called Kiki.

Both Nicholas and Kiki were avid Liverpool supporters, so Yakobo's was almost a Liverpool shrine. Mark Kaheru, another Liverpool die-hard, was a regular there. He would later open The Junction bar.

Nicholas would eventually go back to the UK (it is said he was pushed), and Kiki returned to Kenya. So, I guess that was when Kizito took it over.

But in 2008, the buildings were all torn down, and Tuskys Supermarket built in place. Yakobo's then moved to Kigoowa, where it still is now.

It was a risky move, for opposite was another pork joint – Rhino 2. I never went in there, but several friends of mine would go there every Saturday afternoon without fail. But it would later close, and now there stands Isabella Bar.

Another popular pork joint in Ntinda was Cave Down, just after the junction of Kiwatule and Kigobe roads. I preferred it to Yakobo's because it was more airy, did not have Liverpool stuff all over the walls, and if you stretched your neck you could see the pork skewers you had ordered being roasted. And those were some of the largest, and tastiest, skewers in town.

But we woke up one day and Cave Down had burnt down. It is said it was family wrangles that was the problem. Up to now, that plot is empty.

Then there was Valley Point, at the Naalya roundabout. It was another very popular joint, but probably more for the beer and 'campusers' than the pork. It would change to the Drunken Duck, and now it is something else, attempting a comeback.

I did go a few times to the 'new' Yakobo's, but it was [illegible] times had passed it by. [illegible] trying to cling to a bygone era, for the times of the real pork joints have sadly passed. Ugandans still love their 'smoky, caramelied flavoured' pork, but it is no longer a social thing, and they would as soon just have it delivered to wherever they are.

Apologies to all the other 'pork joints' I haven't mentioned.

