

Bar Talk & Weekend Getaway

Why music and food always work

Bonding. By the second set, strangers are dancing together and someone near the bar is requesting songs with the confidence of a shareholder.

BY TONY MUSHOBOROZI

There is a moment at every good brunch when people stop acting like they have somewhere else to be. At the April edition of Silo Daycation, that moment arrived the second saxophonist Michael Kitanda slipped into the opening melody of Mowzey Radio's *Neera*.

Not the lyrics. Just the melody, stretched softly through a tenor saxophone like gossip moving across a Kampala table. And suddenly, the room relaxed.

A woman near the buffet stopped halfway through a story and began swaying beside her plate. Two men arguing about football lowered their voices and quietly sang along. Someone near the bar lifted a cocktail glass toward the stage in approval. Strangers started looking less like strangers.

That is when I finally understood food music. Not music people eat around. Music that changes how people eat. How long they stay seated. How conversations loosen. How afternoons breathe.

At Silo Daycation, Kitanda is not background entertainment. He is seasoning.

"The room changes every thirty minutes," he later told me. "You cannot play arrival music when people are already eating. You have to feel them emotionally."

And he does. The first set arrives gently. Soft jazz phrasing. Familiar songs disguised as instrumentals. The music sits politely in the room while guests settle into cocktails, camera flashes and loud greetings from friends pretending they had not seen each other in three days.

Then the buffet opens and Kampala collectively exhales. People return to their tables balancing plates of grilled meat, roasted potatoes, creamy mac and cheese and the kind of portions that politely cancel your evening plans. Nobody rushes.

Nobody checks the time. Brunch at Silo feels less like a meal and more like a temporary ceasefire against Kampala's usual chaos.

That is when Kitanda changes gears. The saxophone becomes warmer. More nostalgic. Ugandan classics



emerge through jazz arrangements.

Afrobeat melodies drift between tables like familiar perfume. By the time he circles back to *Neera*, the crowd is fully open emotionally and probably one cocktail away from calling an ex. Food relaxes people. When people enjoy what they are eating, they listen differently," Kitanda says.

He watches the room closely. If conversations get too loud, he lowers the tempo instead of fighting for attention. If the energy dips, he pulls everyone back with a melody they recognise instantly. The man plays saxophone the way good chefs use salt; carefully and at exactly the right moment.

Around him, everything follows the same rhythm.

Palomas sweat quietly in tall glasses. Margaritas ar-

rive beside overloaded plates. Hibiscus Tequila Spritzes cut through the afternoon heat with just enough citrus bite to keep people ordering "one last drink" four times in a row. Don Julio moves quietly through the experience, less like a statement and more like part of the mood itself.

By the second set, strangers are dancing together and someone near the bar is requesting songs with the confidence of a shareholder. And somehow, through all of it, the music keeps the room stitched together.

By sunset, nobody seems interested in separating the food from the music anymore. One simply tastes better because of the other. That is the trick good brunches understand. People come for the food. But they leave remembering the sound score.

At high-end brunches like the Silo Daycation, people come for the food and music and they leave having made friends and professional connections. PHOTO/TONY MUSHOBOROZI



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