
CORNER STORE
sandwiches
cold beer
soda
chips
TBA FOOD PUBLICATION
EDITED BY:
Spencer Byrne-Sares
&
Madenna Ibrahim
SARDINES
WITH OR WITHOUT CRACKERS!
ADD A DASH OF HOT SAUCE!
COLD?
WE HAVE ICE QUEEN POPSICLES!
MANY FLAVORS
yes we're Open!!
SANDWICHES
HOT
COLD
WE USE THE AVA APP
&
NEW ITEMS
PIE 2.50 A SLICE
LIL' BAG OF OLIVES 2.00
TUB OF CONFLICT FREE HUMMUS 5.00
ADD CARROTS 1.00

INTRODUCTION

This year's TBA:FOOD program centers around the idea of nourishment. Every year, the festival pops into existence over the course of two weeks in September, creating a temporary neighborhood that is stitched together through a combination of artists, audiences, and community members that come together. We wanted to create a model that let us offer a wide array of things that a festival-goer might need and eventually came to the Corner Store as the perfect container. These shops are our first line of defense for forgotten eggs, late night snacks, gatorades for a sick partner, and more. Corner stores anchor communities and define them. They are an open door off the street, a person to chat with, and a landmark by which to navigate.

Within TBA's Corner Store there are many nesting projects. Artists have created items for sale and vendors have prepared hot and cold food for people to eat. A wide array of snacks, from health bars to salty chips are all available. We aspire to a sort of reliability that can't normally be expected from an art institution. Yes you can buy groceries here.

In this publication you will find interviews and texts that connect the many artists and collaborators on this project. Grab some chips and a drink and enjoy this read on the patio or back at home.

— Spencer Byrne-Seres
TBA:FOOD Curator

SOME NOTES ON HOSPITALITY

Through years of trial & error + collaborating with others, I've found myself on a journey of learning and unlearning what attributes to my personal anxieties. This journey has in turn led me to recognize how subtleties such as lighting, and general aromas stimulate the senses. Whether cooking a meal for close friends at home or imagining a large scale event in an empty warehouse, healing and hospitality go hand in hand in my book.

Someone once told me, hospitality begins before a guest even arrives at your door. Simple acts of engagement can drastically affect the way a guest may feel received in your space, from your initial greeting, to their exit point; small accommodations leave a lasting impression, whether subconscious or not.

The intentional spaces that I've taken part in envisioning and creating have always reflected so much more about intuitive interactions than practical knowledge.

Acknowledging that there's vulnerability in stepping out of your comfort zone, tasks such as leaving the house and interacting with others can be quite taxing for some folks. I believe that there's a space for healing within honoring vulnerability.

— Madenna Ibrahim
Corner Store Coordinator

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATHILDE WILSON

I first met Mathilde in 2014. I was sitting at my moms spa on 15th and Alberta when suddenly a young woman walks in with her hands full. She approached the reception desk and says "Hey, I'm Zavie, my mom wanted me to bring this to Regina," she handed me a bowl of beef stew. I learned that her mother ran a food cart across the street serving Hatian Cuisine. The two of us crossed Alberta St. so I could introduce myself to this new neighbor and give thanks. I was received with the sweetest greeting, a warm smile and a cup of her infamous Hibiscus Ginger Brew over ice.

I have carried on a relationship with this family throughout the years as we've been in community with one another ever since that first interaction. From my time working with Mathilde at both of her Alberta St. & Portland Mercado food carts, as well as working with her daughter on a community youth engagement project through PICA, I've had the opportunity to observe the ways her resilience, discipline, drive, humility, and unconditional love translate in her familial and interpersonal interactions.

Medina:
I know that you're a mother and an entrepreneur, and you've been growing businesses. You have been producing your products, your hibiscus ginger in the marketplaces like New Seasons and elsewhere. And then you also have a school in Haiti. You have a lot of different avenues that you work in. So I guess if you just want to touch base and explain how those all harness together.

Mathilde:
Yeah, it's not that complex because I was born and raised in Haiti, but lived in the culture of many islands in the Caribbean. One of them is Cuba, I lived there for six years. I lived in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Island, which is like a basin of the Caribbean; where you live with many of those Anglo-Saxon Island, they'll come to St. Croix to work because like I said, Lucia, Dominica, Trinidad, St. Croix had a big oil refinery so they needed labor.

So when I lived in St. Croix I was in the middle of the whole Caribbean, Puerto Rico, they had everybody from the Caribbean living there. So that influenced my culture a lot because my being a Haitian living in Cuba and living in the U.S. Virgin, I feel like I encountered the whole Caribbean culture, which when I moved to Portland I was missing. There was not a Caribbean hub in Portland and I'm thinking, "Oh, how am I going to survive that?"

So I feel like I should do something about it, share some of the Caribbean culture in Portland. That's how I contacted Portland Mercado. They are not a Caribbean thing, but they speak Spanish and I speak Spanish and I contact them and I explained to them my goal and what I would like to achieve and they helped me. And by starting, selling some ... doing some activity at farmer's market and then I opened a food cart on Northeast Alberta and a second food cart over by Portland Mercado.

So I was able to be part of the community of Portland, which I enjoy. It's such a good decision because we moved to Portland because we were raising two teenagers in St. Croix. It was a little bit difficult. Besides the island is pretty and nice and laid back, but when you want to raise teenagers you reach a point where you feel like there is something more to do.

So we searched and we found Portland was a community with a lot of ethnicities, a lot of different people... and we chose to come here and we're still happy to be here. But by selling the food, I get to meet a lot of people and a lot of friends, a lot of other cultures.

And what pleases me the most is many people who try the food or the beverage that I was selling, no matter where they come from, they have one comment in common that pleases me. It's like, "Oh it's reminding me of my mom's house." I'll ask, "Where is your mom?" It can be Middle Eastern, it can be all the places that I wouldn't expect. And it was like the same homemade feeling that was given to you. So I was happy that I can share that and then people feel good and they feel close to their house.

By selling the food with the drink that I was selling by the cup, which is a hibiscus flower and ginger, fresh ginger, and another one was passion fruit juice, people like them and they want to take them further than Portland. Some people take them to Seattle or further down to Ashland or other places. So I realized they were in need to have them packaged. So I learned how to package. I would like to package all the things in my menu, but I couldn't because some of them are too complex to get them into packaging mode because you have to add preservatives and all of that. So packaging the drink was the first step. I have it in 32 stores right now and I would love to have it in more, expose it to more people, and share with more people.

Medina:
Can you talk about the familiarity that people feel when they eat your food? What about the flavors do people familiarize with?

Mathilde:
It's mostly the fresh ingredients that are being used in the food on a daily basis. So all this freshness is like something you can only find at your house and then no matter where you're from, it reflects that.
So that's what I think it is, like the freshness of those ingredients. Everyday herbs, green and fresh herbs. Everything reminds you of something you can just pull out of your own grandma's house.

Medina:
I mean I worked with you so I know. I definitely know how fresh everything is and the feelings you're describing.

Mathilde:
There's an aspect of covering many cultures at the same time also, like when we were at the Alberta food cart, the whole neighborhood, they were welcoming me in for dinner. I really had almost the whole neighborhood come and grab food and go home, and that was really pleasing just to see.

Medina:
That's how I met you is that your daughter brought over some stew for my mom, and then I came over and met you.

Mathilde:
That's was really, really nice. But now I pretty much close the food cart and I'm doing mostly catering on demand and it's work! Because I'm packaging myself, the beverage, it's a lot of work because not only do I package it and craft it at a commercial kitchen but also I go around to all the stores and meet the customers, talk to them and give them samples so they know exactly what it is. Since that's taking more time than I anticipated, I closed the cart so I can be doing that more.

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Interviewing this woman was an absolute treat.

As we wrapped up the interview, Mathilde took me out to her backyard garden and sent me off with heirloom tomatoes & green grapes, fresh from the vine. Pears and apples from her front yard, and of course, a cold bottle of her hibiscus ginger brew; which we proudly carry in our PICA Corner Store.

Mathilde's Ginger Brew can be found in stores throughout the area.

MIS TACONES

Mis Tacones participated in TBA:18 as one of three featured vendors on the festival. This year they will be popping up again, but have their hands full with a food cart they opened up on 112th and Halsey. We met up with Abram and Carlos for a conversation to hear how things are going with then new space.

Spencer:
How has the new food truck been for you all?

Abram:
It's been pretty awesome. It's been a lot of work. A lot of sleepless nights, trying to figure out how it's all going to work out in the end but it's definitely an adjustment. Definitely an adjustment because we're not doing the pop-up thing anymore. Having the capacity or the capability to add more food to the menu has been really awesome. People don't have to worry about missing our Saturday or Sunday pop up. We know we're always going to be there. Now, we're there, Thursday through Sunday so they can catch us every week. It's really awesome to see our customers returning and we have a bunch of loyal customers and they go there every weekend and they've been supporting us since we started so that's pretty amazing.

I wish I could say it's been a super easy transition but it hasn't been. It's been very trying as this is my first business. Everything that Carlos and I have done, we've been learning along the way. I'm grateful to have such an amazing community that's been super supportive with information and resources. That has been super huge for us. Without them, I feel like we would have been struggling a little bit more, but still figured it out eventually. We're good at problem solving.

Carlos:
I think that said, to even add to the community thing, we haven't done it alone. We have had support from a lot of people. For example: Emiko and Chad from Food Fight have been a huge support.

Abram:
They've been really invested in us.

Carlos:
And it's almost a chain reaction. Enrico, Chad have been so caring, loving, and supportive of us, we feel the need to support other people because it's very daunting to start a small business. It's hard, it's not easy.

Carlos:
You could be a phenomenal cook, you could be a phenomenal baker. Starting a business, there's so many logistical things you need to think about so we have a community we have been able to rely on. I could ask, "Hey, I have to look at how to do this," or "I'm really struggling with this," or you know, "we have to think about accounting. We have to find an accountant to make sure our finances are..." We have logistical stuff we struggle with. Again, you have a vision. Sometimes, it takes more than just love. There's been a very supportive community who has helped us out.

Spencer:
What do you think it's meant for your regulars or the folks that eat the food to have the new space?

Abram:
Based off of feedback, people do tell us all the time they love that we're there. They love that we can go and get these tacos every weekend or they can stop by on their lunch break and they know that we're going to be there so that's been awesome and it means a lot for us that they love what we're doing so much that they keep coming back. They bring their family members now and their boyfriends, girlfriends, their friends.

Recently, actually, one of our customers that's been coming to us for probably the past two years was there and their dad was in town from Arizona. They haven't seen their dad probably in months. He loves Mexican food. He doesn't really understand vegan. He's from a very traditional Mexican diet, so they brought him over there and he was really happy. He couldn't stress enough how we got the flavors so on point. That to me was something very important, especially hearing it from somebody who has never eaten our food before to have this appreciation for what we're doing. It's reassuring that I'm doing something bigger, and I'm doing something right.

Spencer:
That's amazing. That's so cool to be able to honor the tradition and also create something new and different. To be able to have both of those.

Abram:
How can vegan food be good Mexican food? That's something I've always been really proud of. Just being able to know flavors and remember things my mom and my grandma and my tias used to tell me and just kind of be able to use those spices and that traditional cooking in a way that I can make it cruelty-free and accessible. Basically, not to exclude any group of people from eating. Any group of people, period.

Spencer:
You're in a neighborhood now. What's that been like, getting to know the neighborhood?

Carlos:
It's really cute. It seems like it's a very working class neighborhood. So, we get a mixture of people that have just purchased homes and have a young family or people that have lived here for a long time. It's interesting because not necessarily everybody that comes to our cart is vegan. They're just kind of curious to see what's available, what's out there, so I feel like because of that, we've actually gotten new clientele, new regulars who are not necessarily vegan but are just happy to come out and try.

Spencer:
For sure. It's not like just this weird niche thing at all. It's just about food. Like you said, it's really good Mexican food that just happens to be vegan.

When I came out the other weekend, it felt like a community existed between Food Fight, Jet Black, and you all Chilango was popping up. There was excitement, there were people having meetings, people just hanging out. It really had this warm welcoming vibe to it which I don't even really feel a lot of food truck pods or anything like that. This felt so much more intimate in a way. Sure, knowing you all helps but I think for anyone walking up it just has a different vibe that comes from the attention you've put into it.

Abram and Carlos at their cart in east Portland.

Abram:
That's actually really special to us also: being able to see some students go over there. They study, sitting out there on the tables for hours and hours and hours. They'll get their meal from Mis Tacones, they'll get their coffee from Jet Black and probably take home some groceries before they leave but it's kind of become an important routine to them. I wouldn't be able to study if I'm on an empty stomach, so instead of having these people like, "Hey!" We have a food option here; it's Mexican food, it's good Mexican food, and it's vegan. It's awesome.

Carlos:
It seems like an ecosystem is developing between all those businesses, which maybe was Emiko's vision in the beginning but it really seems to be building into something.

Spencer:
I was thinking about how Mis Tacones or at least in ways you all have talked about it in the past, it came from this absence that you noticed in Portland of this specific type of experience that you wanted to see and have. Then, you just made it happen, you know, which is so cool and inspiring. I'm wondering how that you're in this next phase of it- before you're just like, "We need to manifest this thing because it's absent in our community." Now you're getting a little more established. How does that change your relationship to the project for you all and maybe where you see it going?

Abram:
I feel like it's allowing us to hold onto our initial vision even more and just be even more loud about it. There's a lot of word of mouth and there's a lot of social media networking. We're still getting new customers every day so that vision is still super important for us to get the latino, latinx community, POC communities just to come out here, see what we're doing, and just kind of have something they can enjoy and relate to. You're having areally good meal that you're going to love but you're also going to love the ambience or what you're surrounded by. It's a bunch of familiar ideas that spark these emotions that make you reminisce about your childhood and that's super important and super special that food can do that.

Carlos:
I think for me, I think I agree with everything Abram says and also as far as within the community I really want to create space for other small businesses to do pop ups like this summer. It's all about creating a platform and creating or using our own platform through the support of other people that were already more established or had access to means to be able to help us. We kind of want to help others who have a similar vision. For example this summer we were able to do pop ups and we had Ice Queen, who is a POC vegan, come with us. She's really cool.

Abram:
I feel like nostalgia is really important to me because it's something that everybody has. These wonderful, nostalgic emotions and feelings from trying a certain thing. For example, somebody had an horchata and they've been vegan for ten years and they were like, "Holy shit! This is the best fucking horchata that I've had in ten years because I haven't been able to have it and you have an amazing horchata!"

Abram:
Well, I can say something, one thing that I do love and value about community is the fact that there is this mutual support and love and encouragement, especially, with a bunch of the newer pop ups and newer businesses. For instance, Hail Snail, they are doing amazing. I love them. Super supportive. Mija/Mija and Chilango PDX, and Ice Queen and Pio's Bakery. I feel like everybody communicates with one another about their businesses. Everybody has these questions to ask around one another to help each other grow and grow together as a community and I think that's something so special and so important to happen. I feel like in Portland, that's a big thing. There's a lot of communities that do, they grow together. Especially with other Latinx and POC owned businesses, I want them all to succeed just as much as they all want us to succeed. We all mutually want each other to succeed and grow and prosper and having this community is super special because I feel like we have that right now and I feel like we all are going to grow and prosper.

Carlos:
What do you love? What is the love? Where does the romance come from? Sometimes the romance comes from the seclusiveness, like, good food, cultivating community, cultivating nostalgia. For example, we have this thing we're incorporating that we started making and it's really simple. It's like, a tofu scramble, with like the cheapest soy sausage. A lot of people grew up in working class, Mexican households. That fucking taco, it takes me home because it reminds me of growing up, having my mom make me a scrambled egg with basic ass weenies and that to me is beautiful. It's not the most innovative thing, it's not even an innovative idea, but that idea of creating something that's going to mean something to that person.

Romance is huge. I think one thing I've learned from this effort that we created is that people want to feel special, they want to feel connected. People want to feel like they're a person. They want to feel like they're a part of something. If people feel disconnected, then I feel like I might be at a loss. "That reminds me of this! That's the focus of my experience. I want to go there." But in Portland, and in any other big cities, you have so many options. Anyway you can go to that corner, get a burrito, but, if you feel connected, and you feel like "That's what we miss. What I taste when I eat it. I miss my community."

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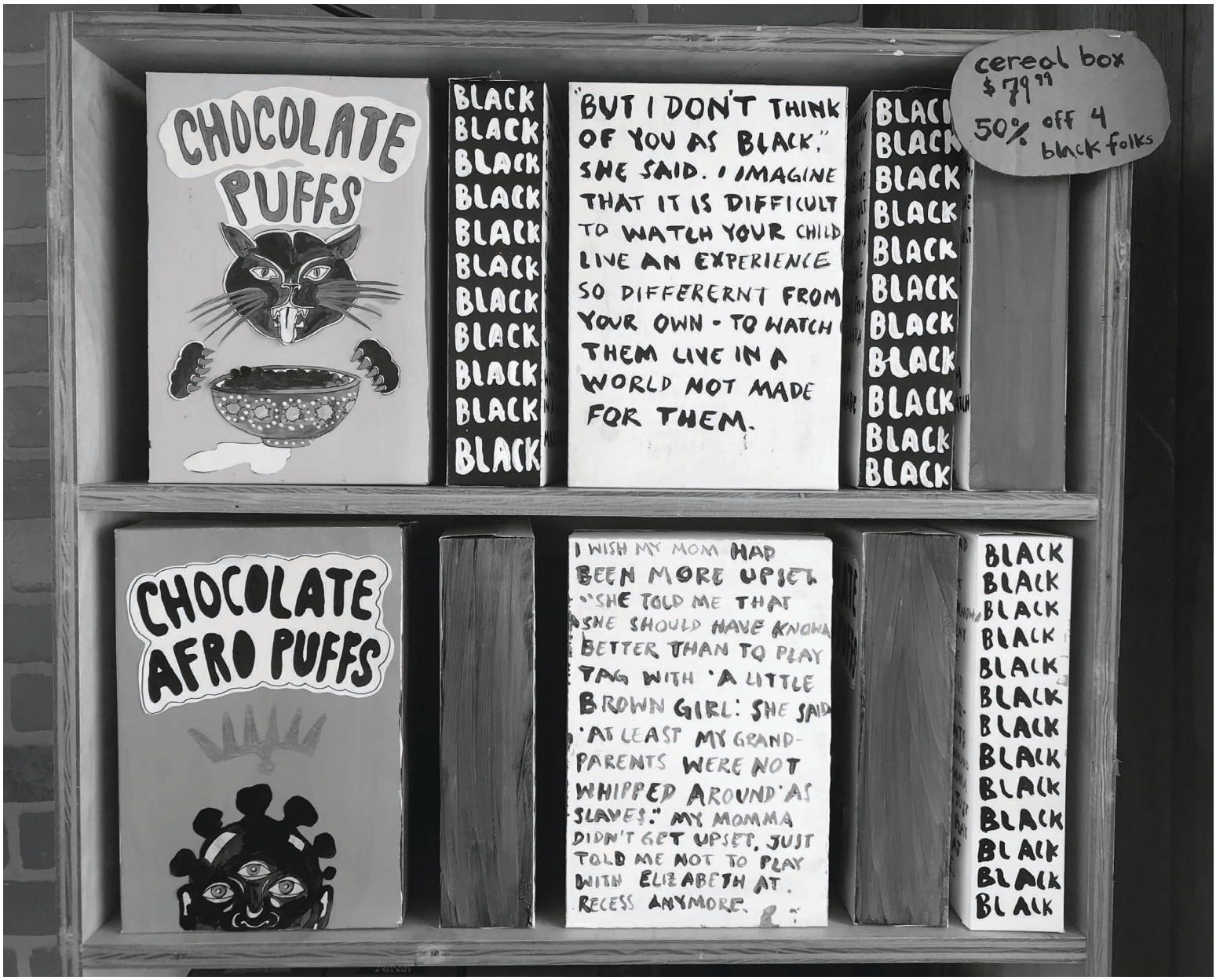
Mis Tacones' all-vegan menu.

Handmade cereal with hand-painted boxes by Salimatu Amabebe.



BLACK CONVENIENCE (STORE)

We sat down with Salimatu Amabebe, chef, artist and creator of Black Feast, to talk about her new project looking at product design, branding and representation within convenience stores. Salimatu's handmade cereals are available through Corner Store through TBA.

Spencer: I guess, just to kind of start things off there is this question around the overlap of food and art. I know you have a background both as a visual artist and a chef, and so I was curious about where those two things began. Did one inform the other? Did they start at the same time, or which came first?

Salimatu: It's a little difficult to say which came first, because I have been cooking since I was a kid with my family. So cooking definitely runs deep for me in terms of eating as it relates to the intersection of food and art. I really think that art came first as something that I thought about doing as a career, or really doing that in a way that involved an audience or a group of people or something that I would share with people in that way.

I went to an independent high school in Maine and I ended up dropping out of high school after my sophomore year and I applied to an early college, so I never graduated from high school or got my GED, but I started college when I was 14 and started really wanting to pursue art and film and photography. And so I had this opportunity to focus on that stuff in a pretty full on way until I was about 14 and I really did that and was just like a huge part of my identity was making art and I did that up until I left school at 19. I graduated with my BA in film and photo, and worked on my senior thesis, which was film. And then I decided to move to New York City. I didn't have any money, and so I went back to Maine and I got this job at a restaurant, an Italian bistro where my brother was working as a server and I got a job as a line cook and I lied and said, because I cooked a lot, I knew how to cook.

It was one of the most terrifying job experiences of my life, I was totally thrown into the deep end and so I worked there for a little while, for several months and saved up money and then I took a bus to New York and moved to New York when I was 19. And so I kind of swore that that was the last of it for me, because I just had such a terrible time. I learned all this stuff, but at that point I didn't really see any value in it. I was like, "oh, I'm going to go to New York, I want to be an artist, I want to work at an art gallery, I want to do all this stuff." And that's what I did, but after doing that for a while I had a fellowship working in curatorial realm of the Hunter College Art Gallery and so after that I felt like I really wanted to go back to food.

I kept doing this switch from food to art and art to food, because I really wanted to have this kind of concrete skill that I could do anywhere in the world. And I wanted to have a way that I could make money, but I also really wanted to make art and I hadn't quite figured out how to put those things together. I think that it's kind of hard to say which came first, but probably art came first, and then food was a way that makes money and then I focus on making art and then I learned that I could put them together.

I went to Berlin, I applied for this artist residency that focused on food, art and ecology. I went to Berlin and I got to work with 16 other chef artists and it really just opened up this world of possibilities for what I could do with those two things, and they didn't actually have to be separate things. They could come together and that could be something that I did as a career and that I could be financially supported from that. But also that could be a way that I could express myself artistically as well.

Spencer: We sometimes define things by the economy that surrounds it: what is the economy of being an artist, or what is the economy of being a chef or a cook, and how do those fields translate when you're traveling or going to new places as well?

Salimatu: Yeah, I think that I definitely didn't have an understanding for a while of food or cooking as being an art form. And so I really felt like that's why I was going back and forth between those worlds, because it felt like very much like, "I am a worker, I am in a kitchen, I am not enjoying myself."

It felt very much to just be like labor, and it didn't feel like this labor of love. And to me art was so much about expression and about beauty. At the time I didn't have this understanding of how those things could be the same, and how I could talk about labor within my artistic practice as well. And those are all things I could connect, so I felt like cooking was so unromantic that I didn't really have this appreciation for it for a while. I liked doing it, but as a job it just really felt like something I did to get paid, and I had these grand visions of what it meant to be an artist. And I think the longer I worked in the world and the more I thought about what principles and what practices were important to me, the more it made sense to put those things together. And they just kind of came together organically.

Spencer: It makes me also think about authorship, and when you're just cooking in a kitchen it's not your food necessarily, you didn't design the menu, you don't have that kind of creative control over it. But also in the art world, you can be a studio assistant, which is basically the equivalent of a line cook, right? You're just turning out the art that this other person has devised in some way. Were there any crystallizing moments for you, where you're kind of combining those two components into a meal, or a situation that you created?

Salimatu: Yeah, I think I learned a lot of stuff just from doing. So, being in Berlin and working with a group of other artists and chefs and chef artists, we created a dinner together called Bruises. It was kind of this playground for everyone's ideas, and everyone has really different styles coming out of it, and it just really worked. We always worked together. And some people were really focused on palette, how the concept or the idea of bruises translates onto the plate in terms of color and texture and what's the experience of eating and kind of having this view. This tactile approach to consuming this meal and creating this meal.

Spencer: When did Black Feast begin?

Salimatu: After I was in Europe, pretty quickly after that I moved to Portland and I have family here. I started working part-time at a food startup doing their menu developments, designing their whole menu and piecing together odd jobs. And I also did pop ups on the side, and I was doing mainly plant-based Nigerian food.

From that experience I was thinking a lot about audience and I was thinking a lot about what it means to make this food that I'd grown up with. I was thinking about Nigerian food and cooking for people who are not Nigerian. Because it's part of my career and part of what makes money, there is an emphasis on needing to market the best that you possibly can. In talking to people and getting suggestions or unwanted advice on how to market or make the thing that I was doing more marketable, a lot of it was really playing up my Nigerian heritage or my own story. It felt really difficult and really challenging to me, and it felt sort of like I had to create this caricature of my own culture in order to make it marketable in order to make it seem valuable. And it started feeling challenging to me, because I felt like I wanted to share this type of food that was really personal and really felt like home. At the same time I didn't want to create this vacation into Nigerian culture.

I started asking myself questions about audience: if you like to make food for an audience, what would it mean to make food for Black people? And I was reading this book. I went to a bookstore and I picked up a book and the book was talking to a Black person. The author was saying "you", as in "you, a Black person." And I remember flipping back in the book because I was confused. Like, "our ancestors" or "your ancestors" and I was saying, who? So then I realized I looked back and was like, oh no, this is like a letter to a Black person.

And I realized it was a confusing experience to have that, because I hadn't had that before, I hadn't read a book that was written to me, a Black person. It made me feel so emotional to think about that and to think about how many times I read something that says "you" and you think the audience is white and so I started thinking more about that experience and how to assume that my audience is Black and how to create a space that's really designed for Black people. And that discomfort that I know so well and I feel like many other Black people that I know also know so well of just feeling like you're not... not that you're not included, but you are not considered in the design of a space or a piece or a book. But then consuming it like all the same, because it's the way that you live your life.

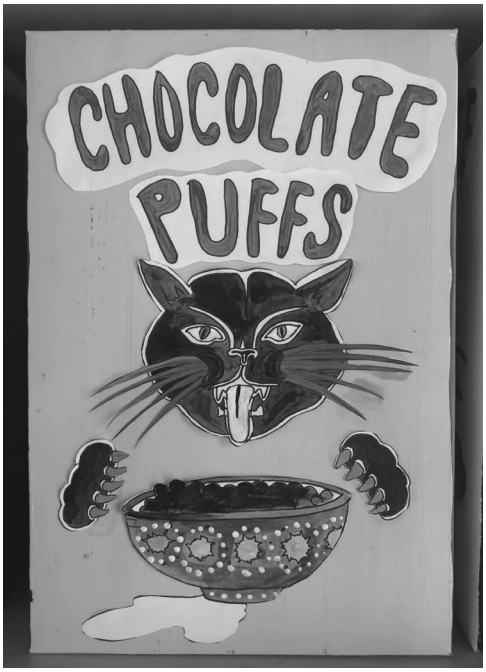
In 2016 I started creating Black Feast, to really create this space that was designed for Black people and that was also a space of celebration and for conversation and really about centering Black artists and their work. And so that started in 2016 and 2017 I did the first meal, which was on Audre Lorde's "Sister Outsider." For the first year, I focused on artists' work. Artists who are no longer living or writers, people who I felt like everyone should know about. A lot of people already know this work, but even those who already knew it would want to come out and maybe talk about it or reengage with that work. I think that was in 2017 and then maybe also 2018.

And then I started connecting with artists who were currently making work and that adds a whole other layer to it, because a lot of people don't get this kind of celebration of their work in the same way when they're living, so it felt really nice to be able to do that, because for me it feels like such an honor that artists want to engage or want to be a part of the thing that I'm creating. It feels like such an honor to be celebrated in this way, so a lot of times I'll have these meals where it's like, thank you so much and they're like "No, thank you!" And I'm like, no, thank you. And then it goes on like that.

Spencer: You mentioned this feeling of home or this feeling of a space that's designed for Black folks, and I'm curious about what was the process of creating that? What did it mean to create that space and to let people know that it was different or distinct from the status quo?

Salimatu: A lot of it was in the way that we talked about it, sort of the tagline for Black Feast is "this meal is created for you". And we say that the food is about a good meal, it's a dance, it's a celebration. And so all of the work that we do to talk about Black Feast is really me talking to my community, me talking to other Black people and it's not like a marketing trope. I don't know shit about marketing.

It's important to have that intention, to be really intentional about the work, and to be really specific about who I'm addressing. So that was a big part of it, and also I think having Black artists there, and also making it feel accessible. We did have one meal that I would say it was very few Black people there. And



I was pretty shocked, because the first one went so well, and I think it was the second meal that we had. And I was like, how did this happen? And it was pretty upsetting, because the way that I talk to people about the meal is really like, this is a space for us, but it doesn't make sense when the audience majority is white people. It's really sad and the whole thing can get derailed. It goes down really fast, so with that I started thinking about, okay, so what are some things that would prevent me from coming to this meal? A big thing is the price.

There were a lot of meals I was making that felt like I wouldn't have been able to afford to go to, and my friends wouldn't have been able to afford to go to, even though it's really special food that I am making, and for the amount of food and the whole experience that people are getting, it's not overpriced in my opinion. But I also understand that for me personally, it might not have been a priority or for my friends it might not be a priority to got to a four course meal.

If there's other things you want to do with your money. So I asked, "okay how can we make it so that this is really accessible?" That's when I came up with a sliding scale, just really having a fee so Black people and people of color can pay what they want, and sometimes that means it's free and sometimes it means you pay five dollars. And that meant raising the price a little bit more for everyone else, so that can kind of cover people and people can sponsor tickets, if you're a white person coming to Black Feast, maybe consider just buying an extra ticket for someone else.

That system has worked pretty well. There are times that it works better than others. Black History Month, we got the most donations, most tickets that we've ever gotten, just in donations from people. And not just in Portland,

like everywhere in the country. And then after Black History Month it was like nothing. You learn a lot doing this kind of work.

Spencer: What's been the experience for people that go to the meal? Have you gotten any feedback? You're asking your guests to be really intentional, right? With how they're approaching this space, and that's not the norm for going to a meal, necessarily, it's like you want to go and have fun and you want to eat and relax or whatever. So do people rise to the occasion? Do people treat it sincerely, or is there a range of experiences?

Salimatu: I spend a lot of time in the kitchen, so I don't know that I actually have the most accurate perception of what people get because I just talk to everyone at the end. People come and chat with me at the end, and I have only ever gotten really positive feedback and it just feels like people treat the space intentionally. It's not just that they party, people are really honored to be part of that experience. There is so much magic in it that I can't explain. There are all these parts, all these working parts and then at the end of the day, every single meal we have there's just like this huge dose of magic where things coming together, the right people and the right place. The people who come to the meals are always so gracious and respectful and wonderful. I feel like I'm gushing, because it's just always every single time it's beyond words.

We flew to Berkeley and we did a meal there, which was I think our first meal outside of Portland. We were working with this photographer so there were all these extra elements. Two hours before the dinner, I was prepping in the kitchen and I came out and was like, "oh, well I guess I'm the one hanging the [art] show." It feels like such chaos beforehand and then it just always comes together in a beautiful way and Erica came up and had incredibly kind things to say. And everyone who came out to the dinner was wonderful and I had a friend in there who had been helping us out, letting us use her car and she lives in Berkeley and she's one of the first people that I met at the arts' residency that I did in Berlin.

So it was wonderful to have her at that meal, and so afterwards we talked about it, just talked about what her experience was and she said that it felt like she was very aware as a white person that the space was not for her and she felt really happy to be there and cared for and it was also uncomfortable for her. So it was kind of this mix of feelings, because you're getting food, you're getting conversation, but also just very aware of her presence and very aware of wanting to tread lightly in that space.

That is a big thing that I think about and that I want people to experience: I want white people to experience this space as well, participating in something that will welcome you, but that is not designed for you. And that there is that discomfort. This feels like a microcosm of what happens in a bigger way, especially in our country.

And so Black Feast is deeply political, deeply personal, but all of the ways in which I want those things to happen are kind of subtle in some sense. I feel like there is a discomfort that I want to come across of being a white person in a Black space, but also that you're treated well and given a four course dinner and all of these things. People see that and that means a lot to me, because that means that I'm doing it the way that it should be done. I'm doing it the right way.

Spencer: Yeah, and that that might be the first type of experience for a lot of people of being in a space not designed for them, and being really conscious of it.

Salimatu: Absolutely. That's so important, and I think that we can talk about these things and that we can engage in that while still being kind.

Spencer: This might be a good time to ask you about, in terms of what you're creating now and thinking about Black Convenience (store). From what you said, I can definitely see this zeroing in on this question of who is the world designed for. Who are these spaces designed for, who are these products designed for and questioning that, particularly in the United States and maybe you could talk a bit about how that's led to this current project you're working on.

Salimatu: It's questioning a lot of who are these spaces designed for, who are these products designed for and I think that Black Convenience is really an extension of Black Feast in that way. Black Feast is a really unique experience. I can only seek you out once a month, and so I wanted to think about if I were creating a more permanent installation, and I love installations and I've always been interested in that kind of work and works that take up a space for a long period of time. That's a big part of what we're trying to do with Black Feast, like taking up this space and creating this space. But then, we create this space for a really small period of time and then we clean everything up, we pack up and head out.

So I have been thinking about how to create longer lasting spaces or spaces that stay for like a month or a couple months that you can enter. So Black Convenience is thinking a lot about the products that I use and when I shop for these plant-based Nigerian meals, I go to Mama Pauline's African Market, and I go there and I see all of these products that are from Ghana, from Nigeria, from all different parts of Africa and looking at these products and looking at how they all feel like art pieces to me, and how they're really designed for Black people. I don't think anyone who designs those are like thinking about creating this packaging for a white audience. I'm very interested in how to continue this idea of celebration and honoring Black artists and honoring Black History through physical objects and through art pieces, that are also consumable.

I also really like this idea of creating works that are art pieces and have the value of products because it's hand made with a lot of intention, but also sometimes can be consumed or destroyed. And thus thinking about how to value that, how to place that and put that in a store setting. There are a lot of things going on, but I've been researching the history of marketing and looking at these old McDonald's ads and there were some ads in the 70s that were really geared towards creating advertising to a Black audience, but of course it was mainly white people who were creating these ads. They're pretty offensive, and if you read the ads, the ads are like, come to McDonald's, you don't have to tip, or dropping the G's, like a lot of apostrophes instead of Gs. And it's really fascinating to see what tit looked like historically when Black people were considered as people worth marketing to, because there's money in that, right?

So how did that change what marketing looked like, and what did that look like. I'm kind of focusing on all of that, of history, of marketing and also taking into account what the advertising looks like now and who it's for now and what it looks like when it is intended for a Black audience, which is usually pretty offensive.

Spencer: Yeah, marketing really holds up a mirror of our worst selves. It's like the things that just get us to buy or consume, it's a capitalist lens. That's really fascinating to take that from an artist's perspective and try and shift it.

Salimatu: I think when you're looking at it from the view of creating art pieces and they don't need to necessarily be like a branding or marketing that would be effective. What would it be like if the back of your cereal box just told you a story? What would it be like if it wasn't trying to market to you based on sort of what are the keywords of your identity, like Black woman, whatever. All these specific categories that you would fall into, so what would you without these algorithms and like if we looked at our personal history on more of a subtle experience with more nuances of just being more of Black identity.

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CONDUIT:
A HOME BASED ARTIST RESIDENCY

Jade Novarino and Eli Coplan started Conduit in a house on top of a mountain in Happy Valley, OR. The house has hosted artists, events, exhibitions, and other programs over the course of the past few years. We sat down to talk with Jade about the nature of hosting, and bringing artists into the home.

Spencer: So how did Conduit start?

Jade: Conduit started out because my project-partner Eli Coplan and I, at the time, wanted to make space for artists and continue curating projects outside of the college that we went to. We didn't have a physical space but we had resources and the drive! Our friend Lydia in LA ran a space called Chin's Push—and she had just started broadcasting a webcam stream to her website. She sent us the webcam and Conduit emerged—suddenly not having a physical space didn't matter anymore. Eli and I would broadcast 24 hours, 7 days a week, for a month and change and we would bring the webcam with us to art exhibitions, people's houses, etc. From this, Jonathan Hartshorn, an artist based out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, found our email addresses and began to correspond with us. (Admist all of this, I moved, and the house I lived in had a spare room, and the people who lived in it shared the excitement to start a space and host shows.) Anyway—if you know Jonathan or know of his work, he sends emails with a lot of photo attachments, found texts, and sometimes it reads like spam. We didn't know what we had gotten into until the moment he asked us if we wanted "care packages," and cumulatively, he sent us about 40 objects, works on paper and paintings—enough to make an exhibition with. We mounted his show in the spare room of the new home I had moved to and Conduit has been housed here since.

Somehow the exhibition model wasn't feeling right to me though, because of the site of Conduit being within a home. It felt like even with Jonathan's project—a project we didn't seek out but just happened through communicating and building a relationship—that exhibitions wouldn't be the only thing we did here. In 2016, I began the residency model out of circumstance, responding to the space. We have hosted artists and their projects as a way to provide artists with what I felt like I was good at and able to give: my time, my care, resources, and a retreat from their daily life.

Spencer: The home you're speaking of is a very unique space when you visit. How has that kind of shifted or informed the artists you choose or kind of like the program you built from there?

Jade: I feel like I've always come from a place of recognizing that space is not neutral, like the home definitely informs my invitation of specific people or types of artists working in specific forms that I feel like I have the resources to support. On top of that, I am very mindful that I live in a borrowed home with my 90 year old mentor and friend, Jaki, who is herself an artist and gardener and while she is so supportive and open to what we are doing with Conduit, I always feel that she has the final word on approving a project or how something gets carried out.

I find artists through word-of-mouth, friends recommending friends, or sometimes cold-calling an artist I feel very drawn to the work of. I rely heavily on people—friends, our audience, etc— recommending artists, though it helps when people think they know people who would have a fruitful time on our property of benefit from what we have to offer. Once an artist and I get in touch, we email, talk on the phone, text, and it becomes very intimate. It feels like I am feeling them out—to see if we'll be compatible as living together, if they will be comfortable here, if we can support them. It becomes a really intimate process.

Spencer: Yeah. And how is the hosting? Is it the kind of thing where you feel constantly like you're on call or responsible? Or even though it's collective and communal, is there a sense of independence for the artists?

Jade: The on-call thing is definitely why this is a seasonal project, though of course, we work day jobs and have other things to tend to simultaneously. So yes, there is a sense of independence, but the artists and Conduit becomes our priority in the summertime. Our season starts in April/May and ends in September/October and that is probably the length of time within a year that we can offer our support and offer it well. The rest of the off-season becomes a restorative time and a time to focus on our own projects, working our day jobs, and researching/getting to know artists for the upcoming year.

Spencer: I mean it sounds so intense to have that even for half the year. Is there any sort of approach you take to like welcoming folks into your home? Is there certain guidelines or rules?

Jade: I feel like I'm constantly bridging or like trying to understand formal and informal, casual, professional, even public and private. My house becomes a place where anyone show up to during openings and events! I have to be open to that but also protect its boundaries—yeah, there's a little bit of a regimen that me and Esse, my current partner in helping facilitate things at Conduit, develop because if I'm not home, for example, when the artist arrives then at least Esse knows what to do. We have a printed sheet that has a list of the resources that we could possibly think of as being helpful—the nearest bus, info about the neighborhood, grocery stores, etc. And we also introduce them to the "guidelines" of the house—when laundry day is, noise-related stuff, wifi passwords, doors, lights, keys—domestic information that is helpful to know! We try to think of everything someone could possibly need to know but of course, different people are going to need different things, so we try to be available to answer questions and really rely on them to be vocal about their needs, or clarify something we didn't mention.

Spencer: I mean that that thing you bring up of formal/informal is so interesting. And I think a lot about professionalism and basically that being the opposite of welcoming in a lot of ways. But at the same time there's probably a need to set boundaries in some sense. So I wonder, and I think about it a lot with PICA and how we are welcoming and basically trying to break down these notions of professionalism and what that looks like in terms of how someone enters the space. I'm curious about how you set expectations for artists?

Jade: This is really a fun thing to think about. It's not something I actively think about, but it's playing out all the time. I think my first year of opening Conduit up as a residency, we had this artist that very much looked up to who was coming. I considered her really professional, in another category of the arts as I, and I was nervous about what I could offer her and if it would be valuable or worth her time because of what I assumed about her through knowing and admiring her work. When it came down to it, though, we just tried to do everything as well as we could, communicating constantly with what she needed, reiterating that any idea she had, we could make it happen, and I realized she's just another human whose practice I could, indeed, support.

I feel that we do this in a way that is professional, but without a level of professional distance that can feel alienating in institutional settings. There is a way to be both casual and formal, and it is all about intentions—this is our job but it is a job we are choosing to do, so we

love to do it and take it seriously but don't have to put on a 'professional mask,' if you will.

Spencer: Yeah. And it allows you to have like a more holistic understanding of your practice and the kind of world that you're living in. That's not about clocking in and clocking out.

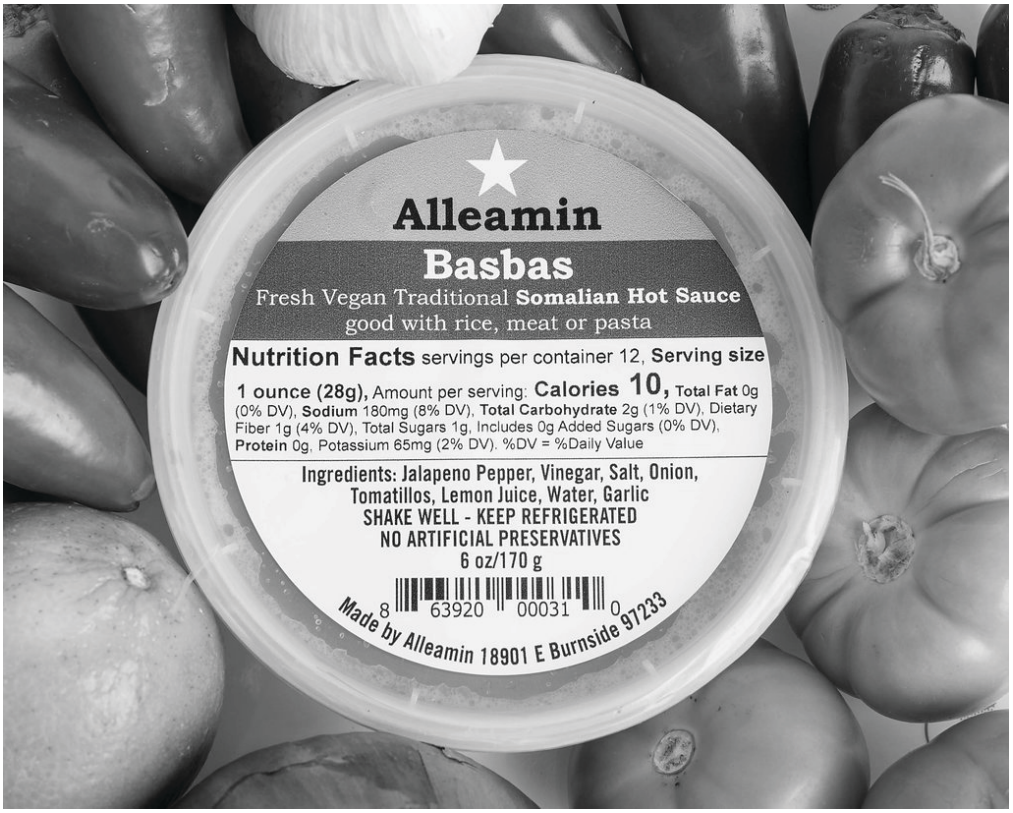
Jade: Yeah. I think that's something like I learned in a hard way from gardening. You can't make a garden happen in a day, all at once, because weeds are going to grow, or seeds are going to need to be thinned, or all of these variables are going to come up that you couldn't have even thought of! This practice is more something that we're growing along side of that needs to be addressed day by day.

Spencer: That's kind of a nice way to learn it. It's a very personal thing to do. You're only accountable to yourself and the plants you're taking care of. I think the other thing I was curious about was how artists have responded to the space that you're welcoming them into being both personally and also through their work.

Jade: I feel like it's almost a better question for them but what I have received feedback about is the stipend and the space. We offer a stipend—and it is small because we have limited financial resources—but it is something that we do because it is an ethical necessity. I've only done two residencies and one of them was paid. I didn't have to worry about transportation or groceries during my time there, and I was able to create freely for a month. I want to replicate that same feeling of care for artists here.

Secondly, artists have been really happy with the unique site of Conduit. It is located on a 2-acre plot of land with 29 fruit trees, a Doug Fir grove, chickens, domestic cats and a dog, and it feels secluded but isn't further than 25 minutes away from the city center. The thing about Conduit is really the yard—the home structure is cool and interesting but it doesn't have too much capacity for many bodies. Because of this, too, artists have been gravitated towards wanting to install things in non-traditional ways and doing it outside. I think that has been really life giving to me, seeing how people interact with the space that I live in that I take for granted because I live here full time. Every time an artist installs it feels like, "Oh. You thought of this place as somewhere that you could put a work of art?? Thank you for showing me that because I've never seen it that way."

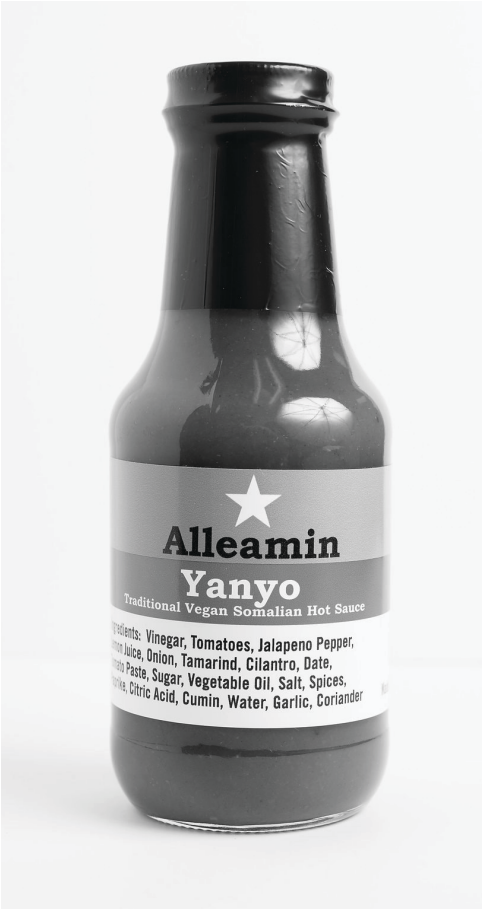
Correspondence with artist Jonathan Hartshorn at Conduit.



Alleamin Products was birthed by Khadro Abdi, a local Somali woman who migrated to America almost fifteen years ago. A self proclaimed strong, independent entrepreneur who learned a new culture in order to share hers: alhamdulillah.

I met Khadro earlier this year at the Hollywood Farmers market. I was soothed by her energy and kindness. The flavors in her sambusa, paired with basbas sauce ignited a nostalgia of East African/Muslim cuisine. We chatted about the time she spent living in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, where I'm currently calling home; and just a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to ask her for her involvement in this corner store we've been curating.

We're grateful to be partnering with Alleamin Products, LLC to feature their hand crafted sauces in the PICA Corner Store. To learn more about Khadro and their products please visit somaliansauce.com



Special thanks to our many vendors and collaborators on this project:

Mathilde Wilson
Khadro Abdi
Elephants Deli
Rose City Eats
Salimatu Amabebe
Everybody Eats
Roz Crews
Jodie Cavalier
Gem Bakery
Eddie Ershbach
Kasey Shun
Taylor Kamsler
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Mis Tacones
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Ice Queen PDX
PICA
Kristan Kennedy
Erin Boberg Doughton
Roya Amirsoleymani

THIS WEEK'S DEALS

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MILAGROS BY
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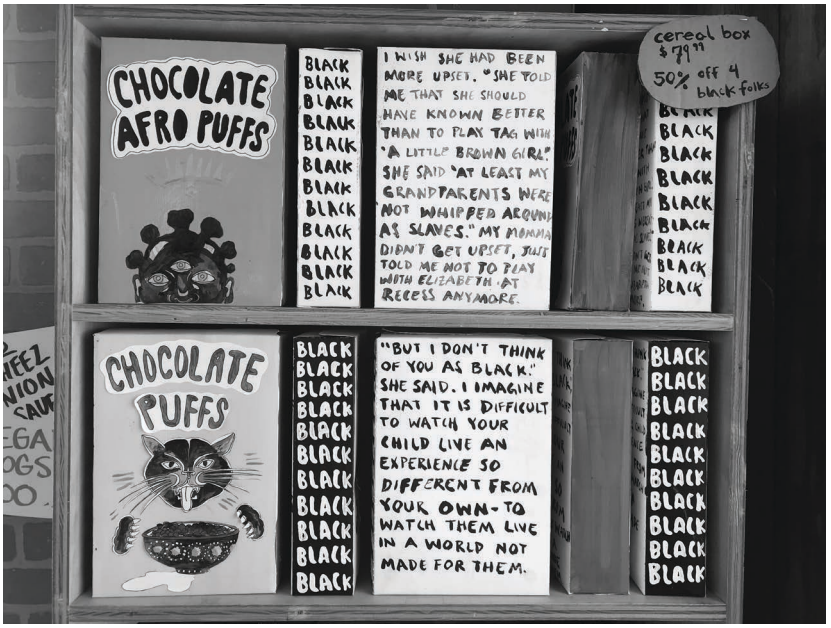

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