

Food Safety Updates

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The Inside Track Tonna Agim & his Nigerian specialty, Suya

Nigerian-born Tonna Agim often prepared Suya, a savory West African beef and chicken kabob, for parties while living in Massachusetts, enjoying the reaction on the faces of fellow West Africans who had not tasted Suya's singular combination of spices outside of Africa.

But it was not until the moment he watched his two American roommates try their first bites of Suya that Tonna recognized that this popular food might have a wider appeal.

"I realized that maybe Suya was not just for Africans, maybe it was something I could distribute." (CONTINUED)



Tonna, ready to start making SUYA at The Starting Block

Food Safety Checks Keeping You on Track in the Kitchen

- ✓ Keep outside kitchen entry door closed, not propped open when loading and unloading -- keeps out pests and rodents.
- ✓ Keep loading dock overhead door closed except when loading/unloading, then be sure the inside warehouse door is closed.
- ✓ Flour, sugars, granola particles, etc. on kitchen, warehouse and dry storage floors attract pests. Critically important to clean floors after kitchen use, sweeping thoroughly in corners.
- ✓ Wash spills off kitchen walls and clean all equipment you use. Leave kitchen cleaner than you found it.
- ✓ Unplug scale, close windows, turn off fans and lights, lock door.

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Welcome!

Please join us in welcoming new entrepreneurs to the Starting Block!

This month we welcome newly licensed kitchen users Tammi Modderman of Hannah, Inc., and Tonna Agim of Suya.

Tip of the Month

Adhere to proper hand washing steps, wash hands frequently while working in the kitchen, wear a hairnet at all times in the kitchen.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Tips to Reduce Your Risk of Salmonella from Eggs

A type of bacterium, *Salmonella*, can be on both the outside and inside of eggs that appear to be normal. If the eggs are eaten raw or lightly cooked, the bacterium can cause illness.

What are the specific actions I can take to reduce my risk of a *Salmonella* infection from eggs?

1. Like other foods, keep eggs refrigerated at $\leq 40^{\circ}$ F ($\leq 4^{\circ}$ C) at all times.
2. Buy eggs only from stores or suppliers that keep them refrigerated.
3. Discard cracked or dirty eggs.
4. Wash hands and all food contact surface areas (counter tops, utensils, dishes, and cutting boards) with soap and water after contact with raw eggs. Then disinfect the food contact surfaces using a sanitizing agent, such as bleach, following label instructions.
5. Eggs should be thoroughly cooked until both the yolk and white are firm. Recipes containing eggs mixed with other foods should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160°F (71°C).
6. Eat eggs promptly after cooking. Do not keep eggs warm or at room temperature for more than 2 hours.
7. Refrigerate unused or leftover egg-containing foods promptly.
8. Avoid restaurant dishes made with raw or lightly cooked, unpasteurized eggs. Restaurants should use pasteurized eggs in any recipe (such as Hollandaise sauce or Caesar salad dressing) that would result in consumption of raw or lightly cooked eggs.
9. Consumption of raw or undercooked eggs should be avoided, especially by young children, elderly persons, and persons with weakened immune systems or debilitating illness.
10. Consumers can consider buying and using pasteurized shell eggs, which are available for purchase from certain stores and suppliers.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

EGG STORAGE

- Store raw eggs in shell 3—5 weeks in refrigerator. Do not freeze; instead, beat yolks and whites together, then freeze.
- Store raw egg whites 2—4 days in refrigerator. Freeze 12 months.
- Store raw egg yolks 2—4 days in refrigerator. Yolks do not freeze well.
- Use raw egg accidentally frozen in shell immediately after thawing. Refrigerate to thaw.
- Store hard-cooked eggs 1 week in refrigerator. Do not freeze.

www.foodsafety.gov

USDA Basics [foodsafety.gov](http://www.foodsafety.gov)

CLEAN Wash hands, surfaces often

SEPARATE Don't cross-contaminate!

COOK Cook to proper temperature

CHILL Refrigerate promptly

Online, 24/7 answers to your food safety questions!

Visit:

http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/Ask_Karen/index.asp

For Additional Resources:

US Department of Agriculture

www.foodsafety.gov

blogs.usda.gov

FDA What's New in Food

Type this search term into Google search

(The Inside Track, CONTINUED)

Suya is a tremendously popular food in Africa but the spices used to make the special rub for the traditionally fire-roasted kabobs are hard to access in the United States.

Tonna's brother used to bring him small amounts of the spices, the same used in the recipe for the kabobs that originated from a tribe in Nigeria. Now Tonna imports much larger quantities of these crucial ingredients.

"Most Nigerians and West Africans are only able to eat Suya when they go to Africa. The one or two weeks they have there, all they want to eat is Suya," said Tonna. There are even several Facebook pages dedicated to missing Suya.

Tonna's goals are to fill the Suya void for West Africans craving the kabobs and to introduce the popular African concession-style snack to Americans.

"My goal is to make Suya common [in the U.S.], something that could compete with hot dogs, wings, and chips. It's a food that has really proven itself for over a hundred years, and I am trying to reproduce that success," Tonna added.

"Although I had no prior background in the food industry, I felt that the business had the main ingredients for success."

Tonna's decision to pursue Suya as his full-time entrepreneurial venture required some research.

With his bachelor's degree in industrial engineering, master's degree in financial engineering, and background in investment, Tonna had no prior food industry experience. His decision to pursue his food product dream as a full-time business was prompted by a conversation with Starting Block Director Ron Steiner.

"Ron said something that stood out to me and helped me make my decision. He said that 'the main ingredients for a successful business are passion, a great product and a market for the product.'"

Thus far in his food product ventures, Tonna has learned to plan ahead and "take your time in making decisions."

"One of the hardest parts [in starting a food product business] is knowing the next step and finding the right information. It took me six months to find The Starting Block. It was a great moment when I found a place to make this product."

Tonna plans to market his Suya as a frozen food in grocery stores, sell Suya at large crowd events such as fairs, and promote his kabobs as a vendor at a farmer's market.

Becoming an entrepreneur and turning ideas into reality presents many challenges. Tonna offered some positive encouragement to other budding entrepreneurs based on his experience.

"Hang in there and keep going. Believe in your dream. Hold on and stay true day after day."

Learn more about Suya at www.suya.com

The Starting Block is West Michigan's Non-Profit Regional Kitchen Incubator and Entrepreneurial Center. Our Mission is to incubate and support the entrepreneurial spirit by providing licensed commercial kitchen facilities, entrepreneurial education, and peer-to-peer networking to new and expanding businesses. The Starting Block will be the premier regional resource for growing any new idea into a profitable, local and wealth-creating business.

Ron Steiner, tsbi1@frontier.com
Director

Jim Henley, tsbi2@frontier.com
Kitchen Manager

Jane Dosemagen, tsbi4@frontier.com
Office Manager