



Five- Star

Kitchen Champion, Chef Dom Taylor,

INTRODUCES MODERN CARIBBEAN
CUISINE TO THE LANGHAM,
LONDON.

Chef Dom Taylor is a classically trained chef with a career spanning over two decades working in hotels and restaurants across London. Until recently, Dom ran his own business, Chef Dom Taylor Kitchen, its vision being to deliver Caribbean cookery authentically and respectfully to a wider audience. With that same intention, Dom took part in the TV programme *Five Star Kitchen: Britain's Next Great Chef*, which aired on Channel 4, and led him to open *The Good Front Room* in July 2023 at *The Langham*, London.

Lorraine Copes, Food and Drink Editor for *Black Business Magazine*, talks to Dom about his path into hospitality, perceptions of Caribbean food, and his ambitions for the future.

When did you first realise you wanted to become a chef?

I knew I wanted to cook from a very early age, maybe eight or nine. I was in my mom's kitchen, regularly baking cookies and looking through her cookbooks. It was very clear that I wanted to be near the kitchen. I'd always be with my mum, nan, aunts, and uncles, watching them peel stuff and fry fish. I come from a family always in the kitchen, always cooking for celebrations. We love to party, and we'd always be catering for a celebration. It wasn't until I was about 15 or 16 that I truly understood that I could be a chef and how to become one.

How did your culture influence your decision to become a chef?

My culture really had an impact on my cooking immediately because it was the first cuisine that I truly understood. My parents are Caribbean, my father is Saint Lucian, and my mother is Jamaican, but I grew up with my Jamaican mother. So Jamaican food was what we ate daily. So rice and peas and jerk chicken on a Sunday was very typical. So, I remember very clearly the day my mom taught me to make rice and peas, a temperamental dish that took a long time to master. Even now, when I cook rice and peas in large quantities, I know how to achieve it perfectly, from understanding the water-to-rice ratio. And to understand the different points at

which it will be right or wrong and needs more or less water. You really need to be able to gauge at every stage to understand at what point it needs to steam, at what point you need to fork it through, etc. So, my culture played a big part. We travelled to Jamaica a lot when I was a child. I still remember very clearly in my mind, stopping on the roadside for some jerk chicken, and the sauce that this gentleman provided us with was just insane. It remains on the tip of my tongue, excuse the pun, some 30-35 years on. It was the best sauce I've ever had, and I've tried to replicate it many times and failed.

What is your favourite dish to cook and why?

It's hard to pick any one thing that I love to cook, but my real favourite thing is curry chicken. Curry chicken and some boiled green bananas, and if I'm lucky, some roast breadfruit is my idea of heaven. I could eat that dish over and over and not at any stage get bored. I'd never turn around and ask, 'What is that dish again?'. You could literally feed that to me every day.

What are the key lessons you've learned in your career?

There have been many different things, and being a chef can be extremely hard. I often tell some of my junior chefs that this is not for you if you don't love this. Because it's too hard to do it just for money. You have to be doing it for love. So probably one of the lessons I've learned during my career is always to remember to keep it fun, make sure you're enjoying this, and make sure that you can still do the things that keep you happy and restore you; otherwise, it can consume you. And before you know it, you know you've reached burnout. So, keep it fun.

How do you view Caribbean cuisine accessibility and perceptions of it?

The perception of Caribbean cuisine has changed a lot. In the last ten years, we've really seen Caribbean food, the grassroots of a big change and a big revolution has been coming. I'm seeing chefs getting really creative. People are trying Caribbean cuisine and really looking at Caribbean cuisine very differently. Of course, I've been given this great opportunity to take Caribbean food to a fine dining arena. The ripple effects of this will be evident, and in the next five to ten years, we're going to see some amazing things because of this opportunity that I've been given.

What do you hope your residency at the Langham will achieve?

My residency at the Langham will encourage people who haven't had Caribbean food ever to come and try it which already I'm hearing customers say that I've never had this cuisine, and you know, I'm really loving this. I hope it opens the doors for all these other great chefs and great businesses to get into these spaces where we eat fine dining food. The Caribbean can be up there and be championed alongside all of the other great cuisines that we have in this, you know, in this great food hub we belong to in London.

What do you see yourself doing in five years?

It's always hard to predict the future. What did five years look like for me? What can you expect from Chef Dom Taylor in five years? I would love to do some more work on TV. That was super fun, extremely stressful. But I come alive in front of the camera in a way that really, really inspires me. I love to see myself on TV. It was as if I came across differently from who I thought I was. So that was nice to see. I saw a new Dominic and want to see more of him. I'd love to write some books, both cookery and possibly an autobiography would be lovely.

I don't know if anybody's interested in who I am and what I've done. But I tell you, it's been interesting, this life of mine. So yes, I want you to see many different things in the next five years. I don't want to pigeonhole myself. I want my future to be super varied. Whatever comes up, I am willing to give it a try.

Finish the sentence: Caribbean food is...

Caribbean food is at the beginning of a roller coaster journey. We are about to see it explode in an amazing way. Creativity is about to explode. And I'm really, really excited to see what all the chefs do next.

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