

Sodexo announces winners of inaugural Food of Black Origin (FOBO) competition

2 years ago



[Sodexo UK & Ireland](#) has announced the two winners of its first-ever FOBO (Food of Black Origin) Competition.

The cooking competition was created by Sodexo's Origins employee network in collaboration with Sodexo's culinary community to celebrate Black culture and cuisine during Black History Month.

The competition was open to all Sodexo employees across the UK and Ireland, featuring two categories: novice and professional. Participants were challenged to create a complete dish that has its origin in Black culture meeting the required criteria.

For those entering the novice category, the only criterion was the protein component of the dish – whether meat, sustainable fish or plant-based – it must not exceed 120g.

In the professional category for Sodexo chefs, the task was to create a dish consisting of a main course and two sides, all with origins in Black culture. Again, the protein component must not exceed 120g.

The live final was held at Manchester's renowned cookery school and event space, Food Sorcery, six finalists – two novices and four professionals – battled it out in a flavour-packed cook-off, displaying extraordinary skills and creativity.

The two winners were:

- Novice winner: Akeira Beckford, Commis Chef, Health & Care
- Professional winner: Keith Piggot, Craft Development Chef, Corporate Services

Both chefs displayed remarkable culinary prowess earning high praise from the judges: Ben Dutton, Food Innovation Director; Sodexo Live!, Debbie Hinckson, Head of Sales & Marketing, The Good Eating Company; and Rayna Miller, Director of Employee & Change Communications, Sodexo UK & Ireland.

The standout dish of the day was Akeira's Brown Stew Jackfruit Bakes, a fried Caribbean-style dumpling stuffed with brown stew jackfruit, accompanied by a side of plantain and coleslaw. The judges were impressed by its simplicity, authenticity, and flavour. Inspired by her cultural roots, Akeira shared that her dish was not about offering a meat substitute, but rather highlighting the versatility of jackfruit, a favourite ingredient of hers.

In the professional category, Keith Piggot's Pulled Goat Rolex – a chapati rolled with a vegetable omelette and stuffed with pulled goat shoulder – was a tribute to his time living in Uganda. The dish wowed the judges with its vibrant flavours and textures, showcasing a refined take on a beloved Ugandan street food classic.

Debbie Hinckson, Head of Sales & Marketing, [The Good Eating Company](#) said: "I was blown away by the calm and confidence oozing from every competitor, especially the novices, and each of the finalists' back stories were fantastic to hear. I could see, smell, and taste this authenticity come through.

"This is a great platform to build the narrative around food of Black origin and is the start of a pipeline that will inspire dishes that Sodexo and The Good Eating Company serve across the UK and Ireland."

Akeira's prize includes a stay at the Scarlett Barn in Devon, courtesy of competition sponsor, The Black Farmer, along with a special food hamper. Keith, as the professional winner, will enjoy an exclusive experience courtesy of Sodexo Live!

Rayna Miller, Director of Employee & Change Communications, Sodexo UK & Ireland added: "Witnessing the breadth of culinary skill across Sodexo's chef community was amazing.

"As a person with a Caribbean heritage, seasoning is really important, so to see Sodexo chefs from different cultures embrace Black food and its history has been incredible. I encourage Sodexo's other chefs to stay connected, get involved, and take part next year!"

Sodexo's Origins network is a platform for employees that brings together different cultures, heritages, and beliefs to work towards creating an [inclusive workplace](#) with equitable opportunities for all. The network supports Sodexo's ambitions to be a company where everyone feels like they belong, can act with purpose, and thrive in their own way.