



experiencing *conscious*  
cuisine at Elon University



*“The way students eat will determine  
the kind of world we have in the future.”*

CHEF NJATHI WA KABUI



At Elon University in North Carolina, there's never a missed opportunity to teach valuable lessons, whether in the classroom or at the dinner table. If you ever wondered what a simple bite of food can teach you, try a recipe from Kenyan-American Njathi Wa Kabui, chef, anthropologist, community activist and food justice ambassador.

## A MARRIAGE OF SCIENCE, SPIRITUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Chef Kabui visited Elon as part of a collaboration between Elon's sustainability department, the Center for Race, Ethnicity and Diversity Education, and Harvest Table Culinary Group.

"In most indigenous African traditions, food is the highest expression of spirituality," Chef Kabui said. "What we call spirituality, these communities call science."

Leading a series of educational and tasting events featuring ingredients and flavors of his native Kenya, Chef Kabui encouraged students to consider their meals as conscious experiences—a marriage of science, spirituality and sustainability. The Harvest Table culinary team, led by Executive Chef Brandon Rudisill, collaborated with Chef Kabui to bring his flavor visions to life at the table. There was mwohe, made from millet, vegetables and African spices; as well as mwago, a dish of black-eyed peas, lamb and sauteed vegetables. For dessert, a sweet potato cobbler with nutmeg and tamarind.

Through food, flavor and storytelling, Chef Kabui is leading a mission to educate on the links between gastronomy and economy. It's why he introduces students to lesser-known

ingredients like millet, an ancient grain grown for thousands of years across the African continent, and why he delves into Kenya's history of colonization under the British Empire and the devastation of its native ecology to plant lucrative crops like coffee and sugar. Chef Kabui calls his food philosophy "Afro-futurist conscious cuisine," a blend of indigenous tradition, sustainable agriculture and holistic wellness.

Elon students were invited to dine al fresco with Chef Kabui at Loy Farm, Elon's on-campus farmstead that grows produce for Harvest Table's hospitality program and distributes food to the local community. Kelly Harer, Elon's Assistant Director of Sustainability, said Chef Kabui's visit was one of the most successful experiential learning opportunities ever held on campus, attracting insightful questions, expanding palates and getting more students interested in sustainability. Harer attributed the success to the collaborative relationship Elon has with Harvest Table in providing Elon students a meaningful, experiential education that goes beyond the classroom and residential dining.

"Elon students are passionate about how to live more sustainable lives," Harer said. "The student population pays attention to waste reduction, composting, food justice, local foods and serveware."



## CHEF SPOTLIGHTS, TEACHING KITCHENS AND FARM TABLE MEALS ENGAGE AND EDUCATE STUDENTS IN UNIQUE WAYS

Experiential learning is a core tenet of an Elon education, and all students are required to engage in first-hand learning experiences to complete their coursework. As a deeply connected partner, Harvest Table works with Elon and its academic and administrative departments to collaboratively design and direct on-campus learning experiences that are rooted in Elon's mission and the student body's values alike. Visiting chefs like Kabui provide the opportunity to open students' minds and palates to the possibilities of new cuisines and life experiences. Chef spotlights in the campus restaurants introduce new flavors and surprising ideas around food. Teaching kitchens equip students with hands-on experience with how food is made. Farm tables, like the one Chef Kabui hosted at Loy Farm, educate on where food comes from and its multi-layered impact.

The Harvest Table hospitality team meets monthly with Elon's Department of Sustainability to ensure the program is continually focused on building a sustainable food cycle on campus, from local sourcing to the waste stream to providing students experiential opportunities interacting with their food program through abundant local ingredient information, teaching kitchens, chef's tables, Earth Day events and more.

Elon and Harvest Table have invited Chef Kabui to campus several times over the years because his values and mission align so closely with both partners. Guiding students through a holistic educational journey, one marked by deeply conscious experiences, is at the heart of Chef Kabui's future-focused food justice mission.

"The way students eat will determine the kind of world we have in the future," he said.

To illustrate his mission, Chef Kabui brought a woven fiber basket, known as a kiondo, made by his grandmother and used in her community for planting, harvesting, composting and even to carry gifts for a dowry. Chef Kabui calls it the Freedom Basket, representing the liberating power of conscious tradition to promote wholeness, much the same way good food does: building better health, culture, community, education, science, spirit and planet.



## local farms, global flavors

Here's where Harvest Table sourced ingredients for Chef Kabui's visit.

Grape Tomatoes  
**Tart Farms, Benson, NC**

Spring Onion  
**Whitfield Farm, Hurdle Mills, NC**

Turmeric/Ginger  
**Granite Springs Farm,  
Granite Springs, NC**

Cabbage Greens  
**Barnes Farms, Spring Hope, NC**

Turnips  
**Cottle Farm, Faison, NC**

Beets and Sweet Potatoes  
**Burch Farms, Faison, NC**

Lettuce and Microgreens  
**L.L. Urban, Raleigh, NC**

Butternut Squash  
**Williams Family Farm, Dallas, NC**

Squash  
**Wise Acres Organic Farm,  
Indian Trail, NC**

Beef  
**Braeburn Farm, Snow Camp, NC**