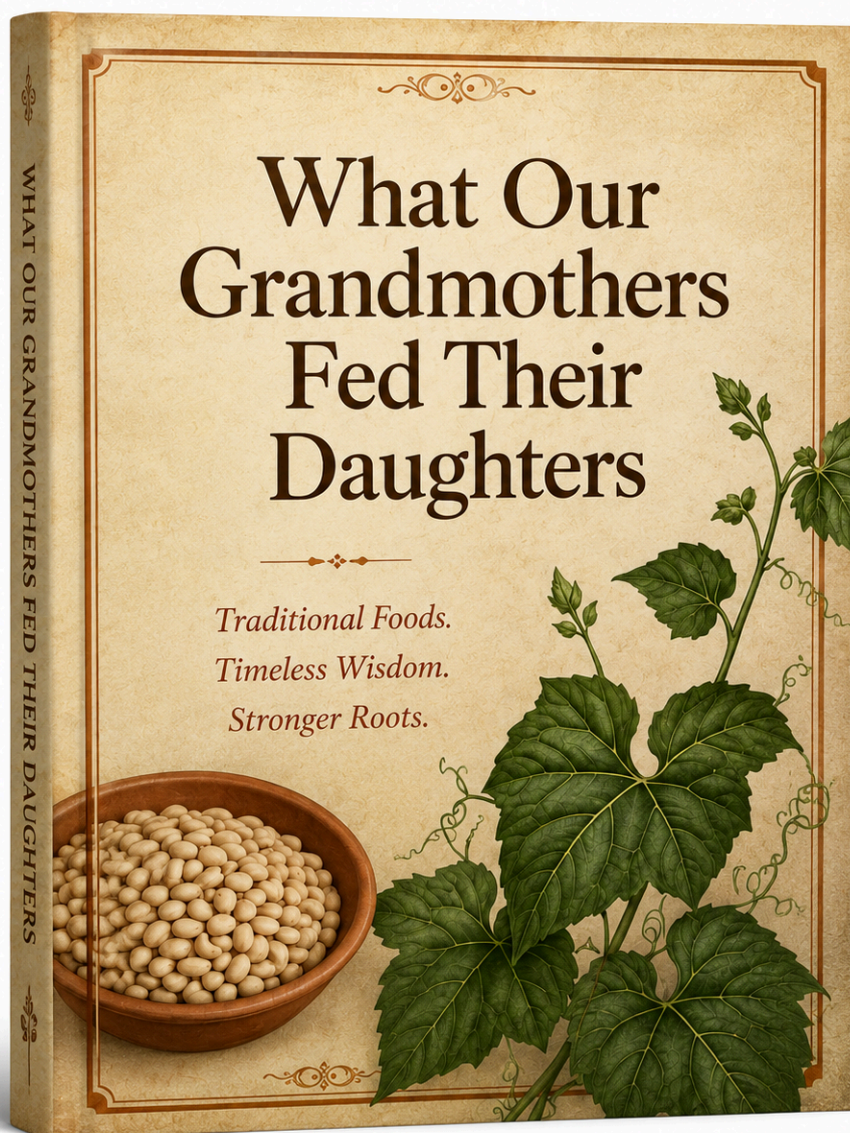




Introduction

There is something quietly remarkable about the way Nigerian grandmothers cooked.

Not remarkable in a celebrated way. Not the kind of remarkable that gets written about or documented or preserved carefully for future generations. Just the ordinary, daily, unremarkable remarkability of women who cooked what they had, fed their families what was available, and produced children whose hair grew full and thick and long without anyone calling it a hair journey or buying a single product to make it happen.

The Fulani tradition understands this instinctively. Fulani women have cooked the same foods for five hundred years liver, organ meats, fermented millet, fresh fish, everything rich in iron, zinc, and Vitamin D not because they understood follicle nutrition, not because they read about mineral absorption, but because that was what they cooked. What their mothers cooked. What fed their families and kept their children strong.

Nigerian grandmothers across every tribe and every region were doing the same thing in their own way.

Ugu in every pot. Crayfish in every soup. Liver on the table on a Tuesday because it was cheap and filling and good. Egusi toasted in a dry pan the way it was always done. Beans soaked overnight the night before because that was how you cooked beans. Fresh tomatoes and pepper in everything because that was how food tasted right.

Nobody called it a hair protocol. Nobody understood why it worked the way it did.

The hair was just the proof.

This guide documents what those kitchens knew and brings it back in plain, practical language so you can cook the old way without abandoning the life you have now.

Chapter 1: The Iron Foods Our Grandmothers Never Stopped Cooking

Liver:- The Food We Let Go of First

Ask any Nigerian woman over sixty about liver and she will not describe it as a superfood or a supplement or a protocol ingredient. She will describe it as Tuesday food. Wednesday food. The thing that went into the pot when the week's budget was tight and the family needed to eat well from very little.

Beef liver or chicken liver appeared on Nigerian tables two, three, sometimes four times a week across previous generations not because anyone knew it was the single most iron-dense food available at any Nigerian market, but because it was affordable, filling, and nobody in the household refused it when it was properly cooked.

The Fulani tradition has never stopped eating liver this way. It remains an ordinary weekday food in Fulani households not a special ingredient, not a health food, just food. The iron it delivers is haem iron, the form the body absorbs most efficiently, requiring no special preparation or Vitamin C pairing to unlock it. It passes directly through the gut wall and into the bloodstream.

When Nigerian urban cooking replaced liver with chicken breast and frozen parts, it replaced its most powerful iron source with one of the weakest. The change felt like progress. The hair told a different story.

Bring it back: Beef liver or chicken liver, twice a week, cooked in whatever way your family will accept it. In tomato stew blended smooth so it disappears. In pepper soup. Sliced thin and fried with onions and fresh pepper. The preparation does not matter. The consistency does.

If liver is unavailable or refused:

Beef kidney in tomato and pepper stew. Goat offal in pepper soup. Chicken liver as a milder alternative, smaller portions, gentler flavor, nearly identical iron content.

Ugu and Waterleaf: - The Greens That Were Always There

Walk through any traditional Nigerian market and you will find them immediately fresh pumpkin leaves sold in generous bundles for almost nothing. Waterleaf beside them, soft and pale, disappearing entirely into any soup within minutes of being added.

Our grandmothers put ugu in everything. Not because of its iron content, they did not know about iron content. But because ugu made the soup taste right. Because it was what grew. Because it cost almost nothing and it fed the family and it had always been done this way.

What they were also doing, without knowing it, was delivering plant-based iron alongside Vitamin C in the same leaf. The Vitamin C in ugu enhances the absorption of the iron in ugu, the plant packages its own absorption enhancer. Every grandmother who added ugu to egusi soup alongside fresh tomatoes and pepper was creating a triple iron delivery i.e ugu iron, tomato Vitamin C to unlock it, and pepper Vitamin C to reinforce the effect.

The pot was smarter than anyone realized.

Bring it back: Fresh ugu or waterleaf in at least four meals per week. Added to egusi soup, bitterleaf soup, stew, or any pot already on the fire. Fresh only, dried ugu loses a significant portion of its nutritional value.

If ugu is unavailable:

Waterleaf is equally effective and softer in texture. Bitter leaf in soups that suit the flavor.

Dried crayfish went into everything. Every soup. Every stew. Every pot of any significance in any Nigerian kitchen across any generation.

Not as a nutrition strategy. As a flavor base. As the thing that made food taste like food.

But crayfish is a meaningful source of both iron and zinc delivered in small, consistent amounts through every meal it appears in. The consistency is the point. Small amounts, every day, across every meal, accumulating into something the follicle actually notices.

Modern kitchens have reduced crayfish, replaced by stock cubes and seasoning powders that deliver the flavor without the nutrition. The soup tastes similar. The nutritional delivery is not.

Bring it back: Crayfish, generously, in every soup and stew. Never replaced by stock cubes alone. Use both if the flavour requires it but crayfish must be present in the pot.

Chapter 2: The Zinc Foods Our Grandmothers Toasted and Soaked and Never Wasted

Egusi:- Toasted First, Always

Egusi soup is one of the most universally Nigerian foods crossing tribal boundaries, appearing on tables from Lagos to Kano to Enugu to Port Harcourt. Every region has its version. Every grandmother had her method.

And almost every traditional method included a step that modern shortcuts have eliminated.

Toasting.

Dry-roasting the egusi seeds in a pan before grinding them, three to four minutes of stirring over medium heat until the seeds turn lightly golden and release their nutty aroma. This step reduces the phytate content of the egusi dramatically, making the zinc inside significantly more available to the body.

The Fulani tradition does this automatically. It is simply how egusi is prepared, not a nutritional choice, a culinary one. The soup tastes better. The zinc absorbs better. Nobody connects the two because nobody needs to – it is just how it is done.

Modern packaged pre-ground egusi skips this step. The convenience is real. The nutritional cost is real too.

Bring it back: Toast your egusi before grinding. Twice a week in soup. The toasting takes four minutes. The zinc it releases is worth significantly more than four minutes of anyone's time.

If egusi soup is refused:

Ground toasted egusi stirred invisibly into any stew, two tablespoons per pot, undetectable. Whole toasted egusi seeds as a daily snack, salted lightly, accepted by most children as a snack food. Groundnut soup as a zinc-delivering alternative.

Beans:- Soaked the Night Before, Every Time

Previous generations, soaked beans overnight without thinking about why. Because that was how you cooked beans. Because soaked beans cooked faster and tasted better and were easier on the stomach.

What overnight soaking also does and what nobody explained until now is, it reduces the phytate content of the beans significantly. Beans soaked for eight or more hours before cooking deliver substantially more bioavailable iron and zinc than beans cooked straight from dry. The soaking water draws out the mineral-blocking

compounds and discards them. What remains is a bean that feeds the body meaningfully rather than passing through it largely unabsorbed.

Our grandmothers, soaked beans not as a nutritional strategy but as a practical habit. The result was families receiving zinc and iron from beans in amounts that the body could actually use.

Bring it back: Soak beans overnight, honey beans, black-eyed peas, brown beans in cold water. Change the water before cooking. Add fresh tomatoes, pepper, and generous crayfish. This is the original Nigerian bean recipe. It has always been this way for good reason.

If whole beans are refused:

Moi moi, beans blended completely smooth before steaming. Akara, beans blended and fried, accepted by most children as a snack. Smooth bean paste blended with crayfish and tomato, spread on bread or used as a dip.

The Whole Animal, The Parts We Stopped Eating

Fulani herders eat cattle. The whole animal. Nothing is wasted, not the liver, not the kidney, not the tripe, not the bone. Every part that can nourish does nourish.

Our grandmothers cooked the same way. Ponmo in pepper soup. Kidney in stew. Shaki alongside rice and beans. The organ meats appeared regularly not because of any nutritional knowledge but because nothing was wasted and the whole animal fed the family better than the prime cuts alone.

These parts are among the most zinc and iron-dense foods available. Kidney is extraordinarily rich in zinc. Tripe is an excellent source of iron. The parts we stopped eating because prosperity told us we could afford to stop, because organ meats became associated with poverty cooking were the parts doing the most nutritional work.

Bring it back: Kidney in tomato stew once a week. Ponmo in pepper soup. Offal in any preparation your family will accept. Not daily, once a week is enough. The zinc and iron they deliver is significant and lasting.

Chapter 3: The Vitamin D Foods Our Grandmothers Cooked Every Friday

The Friday Fish Tradition

In many Nigerian households across generations, Friday meant fish. Not as a religious requirement for everyone, but as a natural rhythm of the week, the market was freshest on certain days, the fish was affordable, the family expected it.

Mackerel. Catfish. Sardines. The fatty fish that deliver Vitamin D alongside the healthy fats the body needs to absorb it all packaged in the same food, naturally, the way the body knows how to use it.

Fulani communities eat fish regularly throughout the week not only on Fridays, not only as a special meal. It appears consistently because it is affordable, available, and the body of traditional food knowledge understands that children who eat fish grow strong.

The Vitamin D in fatty fish is the nutrient that sends the wake-up signal to dormant hair follicles, particularly the follicles along the hairline and temples that thin and retreat when the body is depleted. Consistent weekly fish restores this signal. The edges respond.

Bring it back: Fatty fish twice a week, mackerel, sardines, or catfish in any preparation. Cooked in or alongside palm oil to provide the fat carrier that allows Vitamin D to absorb. Friday fish is a good anchor. Add a second serving earlier in the week.

If fish is refused in recognisable form:

Sardines blended completely smooth into tomato stew, one tin, mashed before adding to the pot, undetectable. Mackerel flaked finely into fried rice. Catfish in pepper soup where the strong flavour masks the fish for sensitive children.

Palm Oil:- The Fat Carrier That Makes Everything Work

Palm oil has been in every Nigerian pot for as long as there has been Nigerian cooking. Red palm oil, not refined, not bleached, the deep orange kind was never questioned, never rationed, never feared. It went into the pot because that was how soup was made.

What it was also doing was creating the absorption environment that allows fat-soluble nutrients, Vitamin D, Vitamin A, Vitamin E to pass from the gut into the bloodstream. Without fat present in the same meal, fat-soluble vitamins cannot absorb regardless of how much of them is in the food. Palm oil ensured they absorbed. Every time. In every pot.

Modern concerns about saturated fat have led many households to reduce palm oil or replace it with vegetable oils that do not carry the same fat-soluble vitamin support. The result is meals that look similar but deliver less of what the body actually uses.

Bring it back: Red palm oil, in reasonable amounts, in every soup and stew, the way your grandmother used it. Not excessive. Not feared. Present in every pot as it always has been.

The Whole Egg Never Separated

Grandmothers did not separate eggs. The yolk went with the white into whatever was being cooked because separating it would have seemed wasteful and strange. The whole egg, scrambled into stew, boiled alongside yam, cracked into frying rice delivered iron, zinc, and Vitamin D in a single food every time it appeared.

The habit of removing the yolk, driven by cholesterol concerns that nutritional science has significantly revised in recent years removed the most nutritionally dense part of one of the most affordable and widely available foods in Nigeria.

Bring it back: Two whole eggs daily, in whatever form is accepted. The yolk always included. Always. This is the simplest, most affordable, most consistent triple-nutrient delivery in the entire protocol.

Chapter 4: The Grandmother Combinations How the Old Pot Delivered Everything at Once

The Combinations That Were Always Nutritionally Perfect

Here is the thing that moves me most when I think about traditional Nigerian cooking.

It was not just the individual foods. It was how they were combined.

The fresh tomato and pepper base in every pot providing Vitamin C that unlocked the iron in every iron-rich ingredient cooked alongside it.

Egusi and ugu cooked together, delivering zinc from the egusi and iron from the ugu, with the Vitamin C in the ugu enhancing absorption of both.

Fish cooked in palm oil stew, delivering Vitamin D from the fish and the fat carrier from the palm oil that allows the Vitamin D to absorb.

Liver in tomato and pepper stew haem iron from the liver, Vitamin C from the fresh tomatoes and pepper, zinc from the crayfish in the base.

None of these combinations were designed. They were simply how Nigerian food tasted good. But they were nutritionally perfect for the hair follicle, delivering all three nutrients, in bioavailable forms, with their own absorption enhancers, in the same meal.

The grandmother's pot was a hair growth system. She just called it dinner.

The Sunday Meal That Covered Everything

In most Nigerian homes of two or three generations ago, Sunday meant the big meal. The one that took time. The one made from the best of what was available that week.

Some combination of rice or yam. A rich stew or soup containing red meat or offal, ugu or waterleaf, egusi, crayfish, fresh tomatoes and pepper, palm oil.

Everything. In one pot. On one afternoon.

This Sunday meal cooked slowly, from fresh ingredients, combining the protein sources with the leafy greens with the melon seeds with the tomato base with the palm oil delivered iron, zinc, and Vitamin D from multiple sources simultaneously. It covered the nutritional needs of the week ahead in a single generous sitting.

It was not a supplement. It was not a protocol. It was Sunday lunch.

Bring it back: One Sunday meal per week built around this combination. Red meat or organ meat. Ugu or waterleaf. Toasted egusi. Fresh tomatoes and pepper. Palm oil. Crayfish generously. Whatever form your family will eat it in.

One meal. Three nutrients. The grandmother way.

Closing: The Kitchen Has Always Had the Answer

This guide is not asking you to cook differently every day.

It is asking you to cook like your grandmother once or twice a week.

One pot of egusi and ugu. One liver stew with fresh tomatoes. Beans soaked the night before and cooked with fresh pepper. Crayfish in everything. Fish on Friday. Palm oil in the pot without apology.

These are not difficult meals. They are not expensive meals. They are the meals that fed the generation before yours and the generation before that, the meals that built hair that nobody had to buy a product for because the body was receiving everything it needed from the kitchen.

When you bring these foods back not as medicine, not as a hair protocol, but as dinner you are giving your daughter something that goes far beyond what grows from her scalp.

You are giving her the knowledge that her body is fed by her culture. That the answer to what she needs has always been close to home. That the kitchen her grandmother cooked in was not old-fashioned.

It was wise.

This guide is a companion to Feed the Root: The 30-Day Fulani Root Protocol™ by Grace Ayodele.

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