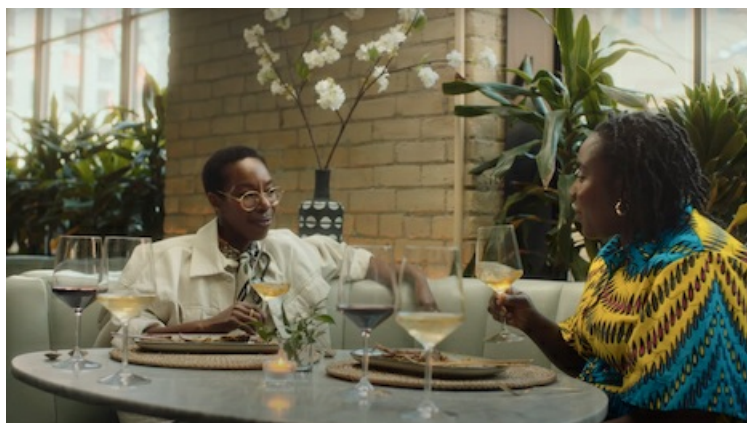


FOOD AND BEVERAGE

Holt Renfrew embraces experiential expertise for Black History Month

February 3, 2023



A chef and a sommelier join Canada's distinguished luxury department store for a conversation about African cuisine and food justice. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

By AMIRAH KEATON

Canadian department store chain Holt Renfrew is celebrating the start of an annual cultural observance.

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Reflecting on a set of culinary interests that bring cross-cultural joy, the luxury retailer makes a foray into the world of food and wine. Chef Rachel Adjei and sommelier Jaby Dale star in Holt Renfrew's latest.

Cultural conversations

Ms. Adjei and Ms. Dale walk viewers through the values at the root of their passion in a new video.

"In Conversation with chef Rachel Adjei and sommelier Jaby Dale" brings both talents together. The artists chat through their respective mediums, both universal languages of sorts.

For Ms. Adjei, a chef and food justice advocate, this involves fusing dishes from across the diaspora together to create gourmet meals.

"For me, cooking is a way to connect with my identity, connect with culture," Ms. Adjei says.

"In Conversation with chef Rachel Adjei and sommelier Jaby Dale" brings both talents together.

Using a set of traditional Senegalese ingredients, Ms. Adjei prepares a lamb Yassa with fonio and herbed squash before the viewers' very eyes.

"Food connects me to my culture because it's a way to experience the flavors in a way that my ancestors would have."

"Through food, I can understand what their experiences may have been, based on what was on the plate," she says. "I hope that consumers get excited about not being afraid to go out of their food comfort zone."

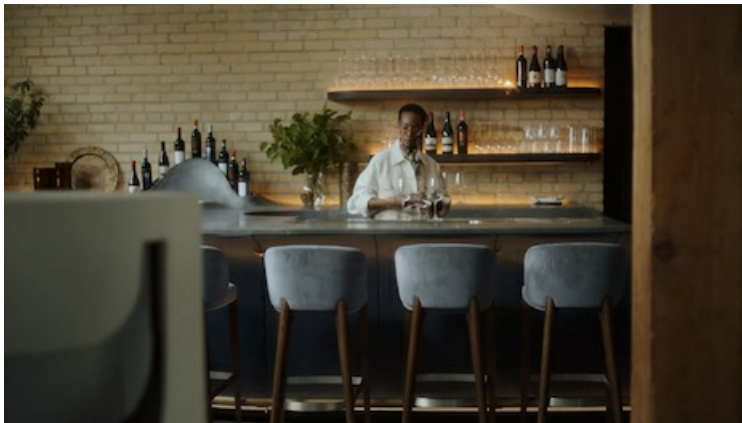
"Chances are they'll love it."

Engaging all senses, Ms. Dale guides audiences through the intricate considerations at the center of her own

practice.

"For me, wine means never being bored," Ms. Dale said.

"It gives you the opportunity to study history, geography, political structures, social structures, changing human dynamics and have a good time."



Engaging all senses, Ms. Dale guides audiences through the intricate considerations at the center of her own practice. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

The expert bases her recommendations on the ingredients culled by Ms. Adjei: Fresno chili, yellow and pearl onions, lemon, fonio and squash. Ms. Dale chooses a white wine from California, an orange wine from Spain and a red selection from Quebec.

"I remember the first time I was able to, truly distinguish what a wine was, just by smell and taste, without [looking] at the bottle, [understanding] the producer [or seeing] the year," Ms. Dale says.

"Being able to know that information intrinsically within myself, just gets me all fired up because that means I can share that information with others."

Global reflection

Introductions conclude, and the multitudinous pair meet for a discussion.

Over the course of the 7-minute clip, the chef and sommelier reveal their involvements outside of their day jobs.

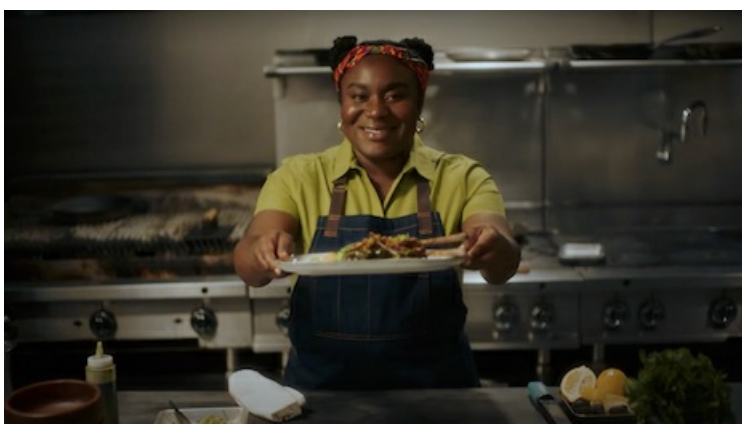
Philanthropic in nature, Ms. Adjei is the owner of The Abibiman Project, a nonprofit educational African culinary concept focused on food justice.

Ms. Dale is the cofounder of Discerning Future Wines, and a member of Vinequity, which aims to empower BIPOC wine professionals with equitable opportunities to access, grow, and thrive as visible leaders in the Canadian wine industry.

Ms. Adjei reveals the origins of the project.

The chef is actually professionally trained in Asian cuisine, as well as Southern French bites and pastries; her pivot is the result of a lack of representation experienced throughout her journey.

"I didn't see myself in any space that I was cooking in," she says.



Using a set of traditional Senegalese ingredients, Ms. Adjei prepares a lamb Yassa with fonio and herbed squash before the viewers' very eyes. Image credit: Holt Renfrew

The duo delves into this a bit more, highlighting the ways in which the notion of fine cuisine, in and of itself, is often exclusionary.

"Often you'll see with dishes from the diaspora, from Africa, from the Caribbean, they don't get the same respect, they don't get the same pricepoint," Ms. Dale says.

In conversation with one another, Ms. Adjei even mentions a bit of a white space, brought about by way of disparity as the market for African cuisine grows, so, too, does the opportunity to develop adjacent wine pairings.

As far as the food at hand, Ms. Dale makes her stance known, expressing support for the meal they share in the video's final moments.

"But this right here is a world-class dish," the sommelier says.

"Michelin star be damned, this is where it's at."

The department store's latest begs the question of what makes a branded Black History Month campaign of quality?

Here, Holt Renfrew's strength lies in non-monolithic representations of Black excellence. Authentic interactions with traditionally marginalized communities ([see story](#)) and the bevy of spaces that bring joy ensure that efforts commemorate, and do not pander ([see story](#)).

The addition of two charitable causes, of personal importance to both talents, extends the opportunity to Holt Renfrew's network of shoppers to resource those principles expressed.

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