

Choose NC interviews Mr. Alphonse Ishice Koce, Chef of Le Celeneraw Restaurant

Mr. Alphonse Ishice Koce is from the Hnaenedre tribe, in the customary district of La Roche, north of Maré. He started in Meurice, 1st arrondissement of Paris, worked for Joël Robuchon in London, and for Yannick Alleno whose restaurant is three-starred in Dubai, he also worked in Doha, Qatar.



__Why did you decide to come back to your native country? What did you learn from all these experiences?

I returned due to the Covid pandemic. Indeed, I came on vacation in March 2020, to see my family and friends. I had to go back to Qatar but the Covid and fate made me stay here. I share my life with the customers who come and eat at my restaurant and with young



Caledonians who follow my international experience. I learned a lot in Paris, London, Dubai and Doha; humanely and professionally. Humanly because I worked with people from different

countries with whom I shared their culture and cuisine. Professionally through the different cooking techniques that I learnt, gastronomic as well as artisanal, from French cuisine to English cuisine as well as Asian, Indian and Arabic cuisines.

__The Celeneraw opened in October 2020 in Noumea, what were the key stages in its development?

Thanks to my personality, I work a lot with local products with this international influence but always keeping the initial tastes. I use products from the Islands, the North and also from the markets of Noumea.

__Innovation is imperative in the culinary field, what are your culinary inspirations and how do you go about developing new recipes?

I am inspired a lot by my childhood but also by the nature that surrounds me, I am very attached to the earth and each element gives me ideas; sprouted coconut, ferns, sea cluster (a kind of seaweed eaten with coconut), wild leaves etc. I often try to share new flavours even with traditional dishes.

__What do you think of Noumea as a gastronomic city? Do you think that gastronomic tourism can develop in New Caledonia, being a French-speaking island in an English-speaking region?

Tourists coming to Caledonia inevitably seek to discover typical dishes of the country. New Caledonia is made up of many ethnic groups, which offers a great gastronomic diversity. I love adding international ingredients to the local cuisine. For example, a lobster from the islands can be paired in an Asian style lacquer, white beans from Païta can be made in a cassoulet, a typical dish from the south-west of France...

These beautiful blends can increase the standing of Noumea as a gastronomic city and also make it possible to maintain the traditional cuisine of each place. We need to reinvent our cuisine.



__Inducted in May 2018 in Paris during the trophies of the Académie de l'Art Culinaire du Monde Creole, you want to teach your passion to Caledonians, how do you plan to develop this project?

We must show that we live on a "gold mine". We have excellent products, good land and a very rich sea. I try to work with local products because I know where they come from. 95% of products in Caledonia are organic and using them is our first medicine to stay healthy.

__Your final message for people coming to New Caledonia for its gastronomy?

Come and discover the efforts of the locals who cultivate fresh products and which are valued by our restaurateurs: honey, vanilla, fish, meat, tubers, fruits, leaves, etc. All the freshness of Caledonia on your plates!



And quite simply Bon Appétit!