

Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe isn't just for breakfast anymore



(Staff Photo by Keeley Gay)

Zuri Reynolds-Hester, owner of Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe, chats with two guests at the Nzinga's Got Soul Tasting Party that took place at the Phoenix Event Center. Samir Bey, pictured left, went to high school with Reynolds-Hester and is a regular customer at Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe.

By Keeley Gay
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Zuri Reynolds-Hester, from Durham, 29, hosted Nzinga's Got Soul Tasting Party on Feb. 21 to celebrate the launch of Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe's new menu items and longer business hours.

Reynolds-Hester opened Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe, located at 828 Fayetteville St. Suite 110, in 2014 with a specialty in Southern breakfast and lunch food.

Now, she is expanding her menu and hours to include more lunch and dinner options.

"We're actually kind of dabble-dabbling into the soul food as far as evening (menus)," Reynolds-Hester said. "We're going to start doing cornbread, fried chicken, collard greens and things like that. We're also going to start doing our own desserts like peach cobbler and banana pudding."

She has been hosting tasting parties since opening the cafe five years ago. Tasting parties allow customers to try her food and give her feedback on whether they like it.

"I want our customers to know that we're changing our hours, and I want them to get excited about the menu," Reynolds-Hester said.

Starting March 1, 2019, Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe will be open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. The weekend

hours will stay the same.

"We're just going to be open later," Reynolds-Hester said. "We're focusing more on lunch and dinner, but we're still going to have our breakfast hours because we love breakfast."

Reynolds-Hester said one of the main reasons she wanted to change the hours was to provide more jobs for the Durham community.

"People are already excited about the food, and I feel like I could do more for the community the bigger and bigger that I get," Reynolds-Hester said.

Reynolds-Hester said her restaurant provides a homey atmosphere where the Durham community can come and enjoy authentic food made from scratch.

"I'm just excited to have a place where people can come and relax and have a good time and just enjoy their food," Reynolds-Hester said. "Everywhere you go, you don't necessarily get that."

Reynolds-Hester said she trains her staff to be personable and to care about customers.

"We remember our customers by name," Reynolds-Hester said. "We ask them about their kids. We ask how they're doing."

She said remembering and caring about customers makes people feel appreciated and keeps them coming back to her restaurant.

"I just like to make people feel good,"

Reynolds-Hester said. "You never know what people are going through, especially in the world that we are in right now."

"Anytime customers come in, we make them feel like family and anytime they come in they make us feel like we're a part of their family," Nzinga's employee Reshunda Body, who goes by Reece, said. "So that's one thing I love about here—and the fact that we make everything home-made—so it's like being at home."

Body said she hopes the tasting party will bring more people into the restaurant.

"A lot of people don't know we're here," Body said. "I think (the tasting party) will help us get some exposure and get some more business in here with the new menu items and the new hours."

The tasting party took place next door to Nzinga's Breakfast Cafe at the Phoenix Event Center.

The event included a buffet-style meal featuring all of the new menu items. There was also music provided by DJ Double J. Reynolds-Hester said she wanted people to eat heartily, have fun and dance.

Samir Bey, 29, attended Nzinga's Got Soul Tasting Party and is a regular customer at the cafe. Bey went to high school with Reynolds-Hester and has been friends with her since.

"I've been coming to the restaurant now for four years," Bey said. "I come here religiously, almost. I'm in here like three times a week. They know my order. They know my voice as soon as I call."

Bey said he is excited for the new changes and is proud of Reynolds-Hester for the accomplishments she has made in her career.

"Everybody loves the menu now, but it's always exciting to try something new," Bey said.

Reynolds-Hester said getting to where she is today has not been easy, but it has been worth the hard work.

"I just wanted to do something where I felt like the food was authentic," Reynolds-Hester said. "Everything that we make, we make in-house."

She said everything she makes is made from scratch and is her own recipe.

"We don't have anything that's pre-mixed," Reynolds-Hester said. "Everything is a recipe, and everything is from scratch."

She said she is excited and proud to expand her menu and hours.

"When you know you're making something and you know it tastes good and you're doing it repeatedly and it's something that you made, it gives you another sense of pride," Reynolds-Hester said.