

Country Cooking by a Queen from Queen's

By Tori Muhammad



An intoxicating aroma fills the air complimented with smells of sweet, spicy, and savory. Tummies are turning and patience wears thin as friends and family wait on Shante Brown's well anticipated cooking. It's wonderous how southern styled food of this magnitude made its way to this Queens high-rise; but everyone insists that this is some of the best food in New York.

Shantea Brown is a mother who runs a catering business when time permits. Her meals are the physical representation of hospitality as everyone feels right at home when they eat her meals. Ms. Brown has a unique focus on her food and that's health which isn't usually synonymous with county style cooking also referred to as "Soul food".

"To see everyone enjoying my food. Laughing, smiling, crying, talking just the togetherness of what my food brings that is the joy I receive".

Shantea started cooking at the age of 5. Beginning her career as her grandmother's taste tester; it was clear that her ability to identify good food was innate. Her talents enhanced while standing in her grandmother's kitchen mirroring techniques. She developed a unique cooking style which satisfies many. Additionally, her meals are selected from fresh, organic markets. Ms. Brown also assures to use healthier ingredients such as sea salt opposed to regular iodized salt. Each meal is offered in various way's including vegan or vegetarian. Why is this Queens mother of thirty-nine so focused on assuring the health of others? She believes that good health and food are everything. Good health is cooking with natural ingredients. "Everything is so processed" but good food is natural and fulfilling. Ms. Brown explains as she cooks her meals from scratch its as if you're watching art come together, the medium needs to be the best. Health resonates on a much deeper level as Shantea Brown experienced first-hand the negative effects of declining health. "I almost died." She declares passionately while gazing benevolently at her 5-year-old daughter Harmoni.

Shantea was diagnosed with stage 5 kidney failure in 2020. The road to recovery was daunting; often filled with much uncertainty. Kidney failure is the process of losing normal kidney function, which can

cause those affected by it to be fatigued, nauseous, unable to urinate, muscle pain and many more ailments. Shantea Brown triumphed over her illness when she received a kidney transplant in 2022. Although these time's we're extremely trying, preparing food provided tranquility. "Food was a hard thing for me because I had to be so mindful of what I put in my body and how it would effect me."

Shantea Brown didn't use time in vain. She motivated herself and others around her by keeping a positive spirit. She educated herself on food's that would make her feel good and healthy which allowed her to maintain until her transplant was successful. Now she utilizes her knowledge to help others. Although her illness was not related specifically to diet, it's important to note that diet played a huge part in creating longevity. Food and diet are also a very important into the road of recovery after a transplant as the wrong foods can create an adverse effect.

A legacy is like a footprint, like your life. Your legacy is what you have created

and trail of what you will leave behind is a creed that Ms. Brown exemplifies. As she smiles watching Harmoni playing with her kitchenette set, the gratitude is apparent. Ms. Brown shutters at the thought of what could have been often detailing grateful it is to be here for her daughter and encourage others to have the will to fight. Ms. Brown believes in trusting the process. After every storm, there's always sunshine. Your storms are challenges and lessons. "You may be angry, it may be hard, but you can always get out of it. Every day is not the same."

Shantea and Harmoni now spend their days having fun and cooking with each other. Her community doesn't even know the health struggles she faced on her own, but the support is never ending; especially if there's food to eat. Ms. Brown exudes confidence and remains a pillar of her Queens community. One thing for certain, this is truly food for the soul.