THISDAY STYLE

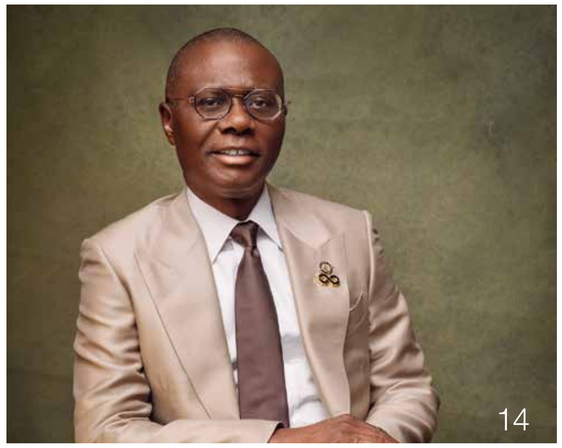
...NOT IN THISDAY STYLE? THEN YOU'RE NOT IN STYLE

SUNDAY,
DECEMBER 28
2025

BABAJIDE SANWO-OLU
LEADING LAGOS

CONTENT

COVER NOTE



Lagos is a city that pushes, stretches, and demands constant problem-solving from the people who lead it, and since taking office in 2019, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has had to navigate those pressures in real time — from floods and gridlock to the daily expectations of more than 20 million residents who rely on government decisions to keep the city functional. Through it all, Lagosians have seen a governor who is consistently on the move, visibly working, and deeply engaged with the people he serves. Central to that effort is **THEMES**, his developmental blueprint for Lagos State — an acronym for Transportation & Traffic Management, Health & Environment, Education & Technology, Making Lagos a 21st Century Economy, Entertainment & Tourism, and Security & Governance.

Lifestyle & Fashion

Style

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Still in the Holiday Spirit

I love Lagos. And I love December in Lagos — even when it tests my patience, my budget, and occasionally, my sense of reality.

The days before the new year pass in a haze. Nobody knows what day of the week it is anymore. Time feels loose. Christmas is done, but December isn't ready to leave. People are still outside, still linking up, still squeezing enjoyment out of the year like it owes us something.

Every year, the pattern is familiar. You sit in traffic longer than planned, RSVP to events you may or may not attend, and somehow still spend more money than you intended. Yet, in the middle of it all, there's usually that quiet feeling — that maybe the madness is part of the magic.

But this year, the conversation around Detty December feels different. Everywhere you turn, someone is breaking down how much things cost — hair, food, flights, short-lets, even quick outings that used to be harmless. The complaints feel heavier, more honest, and harder to ignore.

That's what led me to write the opinion piece titled When Did Detty December Become a Luxury Product? Not as an attack, not as a rant, but as a pause. Because I personally believe Detty December is here to stay. It has become part of our cultural fabric — how we celebrate survival, joy, connection, and the end of another chaotic year. However, if we want it to remain joyful and not just transactional, we all have a role to play in preserving its soul. The piece isn't only about rising prices; it's about remembering the value of the moment itself, and why that still matters.

And while we're being honest about December, we had to talk about dating, too. Because in between the concerts, rooftop parties, curated Instagram stories, and quiet burnout, people are still catching feelings — or trying not to. December dating has its own rules. The timelines are faster, the intentions blurrier, and sometimes the romance ends before the party does. Which is why we put together The Lagos Girl's Guide to Surviving Detty December Dating. Think of it as your stylish, street-smart survival kit for navigating rooftop flirts, "let's link up before you travel" situationships, and December-only lovers who disappear by January 5th. It's fun, slightly savage, and very real.

There's more in these pages — fashion, features, and small pockets of joy designed to meet you exactly where you are. However, you're spending the season — outside, inside, loved-up or flying solo — here's wishing you a holiday that feels good. And if the prices won't slow down, at least let the energy be worth it.

From all of us on the team, sending love — now, and into what comes next.

Love,

Konye

WHAT'S HOT THIS HOLIDAY SEASON: FIVE TRENDS YOU'LL LOVE

The holidays are still in full swing—Christmas may have passed, but the festive energy is very much alive. The concerts are ongoing, the nights are still long, the lunches are still turning into mini photoshoots, and Lagos hasn't stopped dressing like the world is its runway. December never knows how to slow down, and honestly, neither should your wardrobe. This year's holiday trends are bold, expressive, and perfectly tailored to take you from post-Christmas brunches to New Year's Eve parties without a single outfit crisis. If you're still stepping out (and we know you are), here are the five styles ruling the season right now.

ANGEL OBASI

CHICHI ADOGU

MODEL FOR LFDW

By **Funke Babs-Kufeji**

1. Glitter Day and Night

Sparkle is having its moment—again—and the holidays are its playground. Sequined skirts, lamé tops, metallic slip dresses, glossy lids, sparkly heels… glitter didn't wait for Christmas Day; it has become the dress code for every festive outing.

What we love most is how it's no longer a night-only trend. A soft gold knit at brunch? Perfect. A metallic midi for a late Christmas lunch or Boxing Day hangout? Even better. A silver mesh top layered under a blazer for church? Stylish, unexpected, and very on-season.

Glitter has become the holiday spirit in fabric form—joyful, bold, and unapologetically dramatic.

image – chichi Adogu

2. Coordinated Sets

Co-ords are still the undefeated champions of December dressing. They've been everywhere this season, and for good reason: they make you look put-together without requiring the mental gymnastics of outfit planning.

Satin sets for Christmas Eve dinners, printed two-pieces for travel, blazer-short combos for spontaneous "let's step out" moments—co-ords simply understand the assignment. Add minimal jewellery, comfortable heels or sleek flats, and you're ready for whatever the holidays throw your way. They pack beautifully, they photograph even better, and they're perfect for those hopping from Lagos to Abuja to Accra and back.

3. Drama Sleeves

This year's sleeves came prepared to perform. Puffed shoulders, exaggerated bell sleeves, bishop sleeves that float, elongated cuffs that move with flair—every sleeve is trying to tell a story. Drama sleeves are the easiest way to make a simple outfit holiday-ready. Even the plainest shift dress feels instantly elevated with the right sleeve. They bring festive energy without crossing into costume territory and add elegance without relying on sequins.

4. Sheer Everything

Sheer fabrics continue to reign—tulle, mesh, organza, soft chiffon, and peek-through panels are everywhere this holiday season. They add romance and dimension to outfits in a way that feels modern, soft, and slightly whimsical.

For daytime, layering is key: sheer shirts over tanks, tulle skirts over slips, organza tops over structured pieces. At night, you can go bolder—mesh dresses, sheer sleeves, and strategically placed panels that show just enough to feel festive without doing too much.

5. Statement Accessories

If you prefer simplicity but still want that festive dazzle, statement accessories are doing all the heavy lifting this season. Oversized earrings, chunky necklaces, sculptural bags, embellished hair clips, jewelled flats, dramatic belts, and shoes with personality—they're everywhere, and they're working overtime.

They make the simplest dress look intentional and holiday-ready. A white dress becomes a standout with gold earrings and a bold clutch. A basic jumpsuit transforms with a metallic belt and striking shoes. And the best part? One statement piece can carry you across multiple events—practical and stylish.

pic – model for lfdw

Sunday, December 28, 2025 Vol. 22, No. 11184 Style

IJEOMA NWOGWUGWU @ 60

Veteran journalist and media executive Ijeoma Nwogwugwu was celebrated recently in Lagos, as colleagues, protégés, and leading figures from politics, media, and business gathered to mark her 60th birthday.

The intimate dinner was hosted by Chairman and Publisher of THISDAY and ARISE TV Group, Prince Nduka Obaigbena, at Oh La La Café, Ikoyi. The event drew an influential audience who paid tribute to Nwogwugwu's distinguished career, intellectual depth, and enduring influence on Nigeria's media and public policy space. The evening was marked by warm reflections, shared memories, and heartfelt tributes to a woman widely regarded as one of the most formidable and respected figures in Nigeria's media landscape.

Photography: Sunday Adigun and Kunle Ogunfuyi


AYO AMINU


CHINEDU ZEPHANIAH


NAFISA MOHAMMED


(L-R) RUTH OSIME, MAIDEN IBRU, OLUSEGUN OSOBA, IJEOMA NWOGWUGWU, NDUKA OBAIGBENA AND REUBEN ABATI


SAM AMUKA


JAMES IBORI


EBELE AND NDUKA IRABOR


SAM IWUAJOKU AND OBAIGBENA


AMAECHI OKOBI


AUGUSTINE AND FERISHAT ALEGEH


PETER OBI


AYONA TRIMNELL


CHIKE OGEAH


DIDI NDIOMU


DORIS OJO , FAUZIYA MOHAMMED


EBENEZER ONYEAGWU AND ADAOBI NWAPA


MARIAN OMATSONE , NWOGWUGWU, NKIRU ANUMUDU

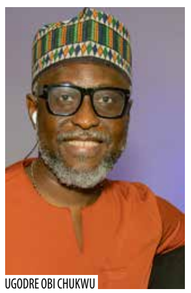

KONYE NWABOGOR AND AUSTIN OGANNAH


SHAKA MOMODU


RUFAI OSENI


RAMON NASIR


HENRY IMASEKHA


UGODRE OBI CHUKWU


CHUKS ONWUDINJO


MR AND MRS OBINNA CHIMA


WALE OLALEYE


TUNDUN ABIOLA


YEMI AJAYI

IJEOMA NWOGWUGWU @ 60

(L-R) OGANNAH, ROTUS ODIRI, OBAIGBENA, NWOGWUGWU, RUTH, ANOSIKE AND OGEAH

GRACE OSIME

KEN ETETE

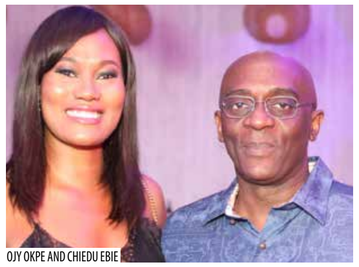
KOLA ADESINA

TOPE SHONUBI

GBOYADE SHOMUYIWA

KUNLE ELEBUTE

NOGIE MEGGISON



OJY OKPE AND CHIEDU EBIE

EZE ANABA, NWOGWUGWU, OBY IHONO AND ANGELA AGIDI

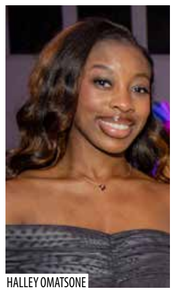
FIDELIS ANOSIKE

CHUMA ANOSIKE

MOFE OMATSONE

MARIFA WHYTE

OKEY ANUEYIAGU



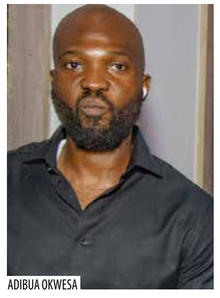
HALLEY OMATSONE

ROLAKE AKINKUGBE-FILANI AND GUEST

NICOLE OMATSONE

NGOZI EDOZIEN

SUNDAY ADIGUN



ADIBUA OKWESA

LANDMARK CONTRIBUTION TO LEGAL JURISPRUDENCE WITH BOOK LAUNCH

The much-awaited book, Contemporary Law of Tort in Nigeria, authored by renowned city lawyer, Val Uche Obi, SAN, was unveiled in grand style recently at the Radisson Hotel, Victoria Island, Lagos. The high-profile event, led by Chief Wole Olanipekun, SAN, drew an impressive gathering of eminent lawyers, judges, academics, and key stakeholders within the Nigerian legal community. The unveiling was marked by an atmosphere of celebration and intellectual engagement, underscoring the book's significance as a timely and authoritative contribution to the development of tort law in Nigeria.

HON. JUSTICE BODE RHODES-VIVOUR (JSC RTD), WOLE OLANIPEKUN SAN & UCHE VAL OBI SAN

SENA ANTHONY

KEMI PINHEIRO

ELLA OBI

NNEKA ONYEALI-IKPE

INNOCENT IKE

FABIAN AJOGWU SAN

HRH EZE DAMIAN OBIANIGWE

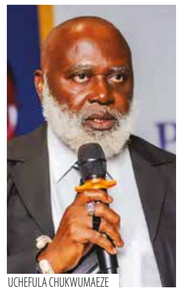
OBIOHA OKOROAFOR

NKECHI OBI

GBOLAHAM ELIAS

ANTHONY IDIGBE

REV KOYINSOLA AJAYI



UCHEFULA CHUKWUMAEZE

THESSY BRONGA BAGU

POLY EMENIKE

EFFIONG OKON

CHARLES NWODO JR

BANK ANTHONY-OKOROAFOR

FOLUKE DADA-LAWSON

PHILIP OBIOHA

PATRICK AKINWUNTAN

OKEY NWUKE

JUDE AMADI

BLESSING CHOKO

AFROGALACTIC: A NIGHT OF LUXURY, ART, AND FASHION

On December 12, 2025, Afrogalactic, Isi Atagamen's premier fashion presentation, took over the Lagos Jetski Club, blending African heritage with futuristic elegance. Powered by Araafit, the event brought together fashion, art, and culture in a polished, immersive experience. Guests arrived dressed in futuristic, elegant, and luxe styles, ready for an evening of sophistication. From the moment they stepped into the venue, the space reflected careful attention to detail, with art-directed lighting and visuals that created a captivating atmosphere. Every element of the presentation was designed to enhance the experience and highlight the fashion on display.

The runway showcased a curated collection by Isi Atagamen that celebrated African heritage through modern design. Each piece reflected meticulous craftsmanship, thoughtful construction, and a forward-looking aesthetic. The collection balanced bold innovation with refined elegance, offering a fresh perspective on contemporary African fashion. Guests were drawn into a narrative that combined culture, artistry, and a vision for the future. In addition to the fashion presentation, Araafit's luxury wellness integration added a subtle but impactful dimension to the evening. These thoughtful touches emphasised balance, sophistication, and holistic style, creating an experience that went beyond the runway. Carefully executed brand moments throughout the night maintained a seamless flow and reinforced the event's commitment to quality and refinement. Afrogalactic was more than a fashion show. It was a celebration of innovation, creativity, and cultural pride. The evening offered guests a glimpse into a future where African fashion continues to evolve, guided by elegance, precision, and intentional design. Every detail spoke to a vision of luxury that is both modern and deeply rooted in heritage.


ISI ITAGAMEN


EDET EXODUS


GODSON UKAEGBU.


WISSAM AND CYNTHIA


SOPHY AND NICK


MORIAM MUSA


NEHITA IRIEME.

THISDAY Style
OPINION
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BY **KONYE CHELSEA** NWABOGOR

WHEN DID DETTY DECEMBER BECOME A LUXURY PRODUCT?

Detty December did not start as a premium experience. That's important to say upfront. It began as an unstructured homecoming — Nigerians returning for the holidays, friends reuniting, shows popping up organically, restaurants staying open late simply because people were outside and spending. It was messy, joyful, slightly chaotic, and largely unplanned. Lagos absorbed it the way Lagos absorbs everything: loudly, imperfectly, but generously. However, somewhere along the line, that generosity is thinning out.

This year, Detty December feels heavier. Pricier. More tightly wound. The excitement is still there, but it now comes with calculation — of costs, of safety, of whether the experience is worth the strain. The question people are increasingly asking is no longer "What are you doing this December?" but "At what cost?"

This year, the complaints are not subtle. They are loud, detailed, and everywhere. Social media is flooded with screenshots of ridiculously high flight fares, salon price cards, short-let listings and event tables. Instagram captions read like cautionary tales. X threads dissect the economics of enjoying December in Lagos with forensic precision. Someone wrote, "Detty December is now a luxury experience marketed as a cultural one," and the replies came fast — agreement after agreement. It would be easy to blame IJGBs or inflation, but that explanation doesn't hold up on its own. Nigerians in the diaspora do arrive in large numbers, and they do spend. But what's striking this year is that they're also complaining. For many returnees, the usual mental conversion — "it's just a hundred dollars" — no longer works. A hundred dollars disappears in one Uber ride, one dinner, one service. Short-lets are priced like high-end hotels elsewhere. Domestic flights cost more than international ones. Even visitors with foreign currency are questioning the value.

That shift matters because it signals that Detty December has crossed from being expensive relative to locals to being expensive in absolute terms.

At the same time, locals feel increasingly edged out. Not dramatically, but quietly. Lagosians who have sustained the city for eleven months now speak of December as a month they sit out. Fewer outings. Fewer events. More house gatherings. Not because the desire isn't there, but because participation feels punishing.

What Detty December is exposing, uncomfortably, is not just excess but inequality — how sharply different life feels depending on what you earn and where your money comes from.

None of this exists in a vacuum. Enjoyment now unfolds against a backdrop of heightened alertness. Insecurity has also become part of the mental calculus. People plan movements carefully. Even celebrations carry an undertone of vigilance. Add the familiar Lagos traffic — not new, but more draining when paired with high costs — and the effort required to enjoy December begins to feel disproportionate.

What complicates the conversation is that many of the businesses being criticised are not necessarily acting maliciously. Operating costs are real. Power, logistics, staffing and rent have all gone up. December is peak season, often the period that sustains businesses through slower months. Charging more is not the issue. Charging without clarity or commensurate value is.

And this is where the absence of government involvement becomes glaring. Detty December has evolved into a global tourism season, but it operates almost entirely without structure. There is no coordinated tourism strategy, no seasonal flight intervention, no consumer protection framework, no visible safety or transport planning designed for this scale of movement. The state enjoys the cultural visibility, but the execution is left to a free-for-all market.

In that vacuum, urgency becomes policy. Fear becomes pricing logic.

Short-term thinking thrives.

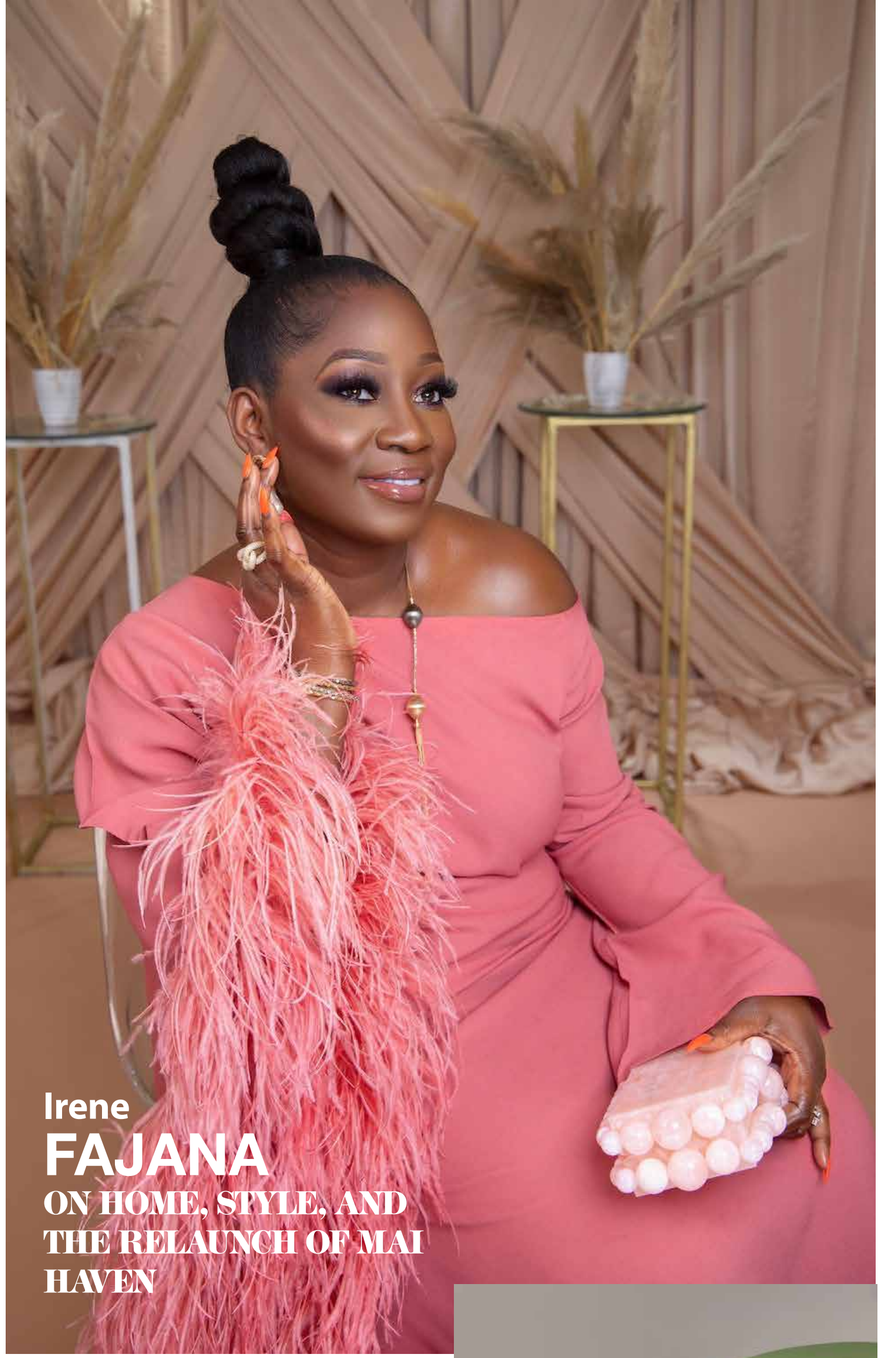
The question is no longer whether Detty December can survive, but what version of it we are choosing to protect.

The danger here is not that Detty December will collapse. Lagos is too magnetic for that. The danger is subtler: that the season loses its emotional goodwill. That it becomes something people endure, navigate, or survive — rather than something they look forward to with ease.

Already, comparisons are creeping in. Accra. Kigali. Cape Town. Cities offering more structure, more predictability, and increasingly competitive December experiences. Lagos still wins on energy, but energy alone cannot indefinitely compensate for stress, cost, and exclusion.

Detty December does not need to become cheaper. Nigerians understand seasonality. What people are asking for — loudly now — is fairness, transparency, safety, and value. They want to feel hosted, not hustled.

Because once a cultural moment becomes something you watch rather than participate in, the music may still be loud — but the meaning quietly fades. And Lagos, of all cities, should know that culture is sustained not by hype, but by belonging.



Irene FAJANA
ON HOME, STYLE, AND THE RELAUNCH OF MAI HAVEN

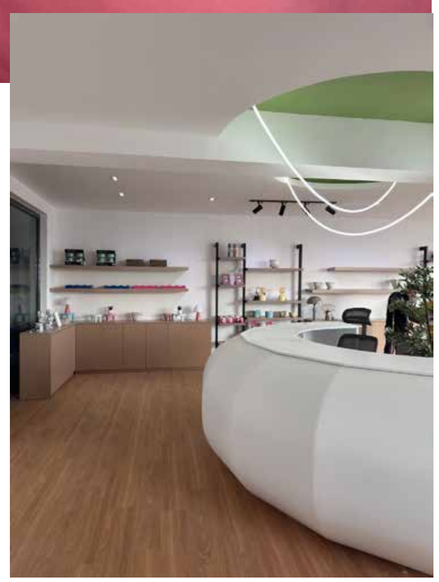
Irene Fajana speaks about home the way some people speak about identity. For her, it is not just a place, but a feeling of comfort, safety, belonging, and quiet self-expression. It is where memories are made, values are shaped, and everyday life unfolds with intention. That philosophy sits at the heart of Mai Haven, the home and lifestyle brand she is reintroducing after a thoughtful pause. Having previously run two successful retail stores, Irene stepped back long enough to gain clarity, perspective, and a renewed sense of purpose. Motherhood, travel, and the rhythms of daily living deepened her understanding of what people truly want from their spaces—not perfection, but warmth, individuality, and ease. The return to home and lifestyle felt less like a business decision and more like a calling she could no longer ignore. With Mai Haven, she curates from lived experience—drawing inspiration from global markets, everyday family life, and her belief that a well-loved home quietly supports a well-lived life. In this conversation with FUNKE BABS KUFEJI she reflects on what home really means to her, the lessons retail taught her, and why creating beautiful, comforting spaces will always be personal.

You describe yourself as a homemaker at heart. What does "home" really mean to you, and how has it shaped the life you're building?
Home to me represents comfort, safety, and belonging. It is where memories are created, relationships are nurtured, and individuality is freely expressed. I believe home shapes daily routines, influences values, and provides a supportive environment to grow and thrive. It is not just a physical space, but the people and experiences within it. Building life around this idea of home means creating a welcoming atmosphere, prioritising meaningful connections, and cultivating a space that reflects personal identity. It is about finding joy in everyday moments, whether through shared meals, cosy gatherings, or quiet reflection. This sense of home inspires resilience and purpose, guiding my choices and aspirations toward a balanced and fulfilling life.

You once ran two successful retail stores. What are the biggest lessons you learned from that chapter?
Building strong customer connections is essential, as understanding customers' needs and preferences helps foster loyalty and encourages repeat business. Adaptability is equally important in an ever-changing retail landscape and being flexible and open to change in areas such as product offerings or marketing strategies can make a significant difference in staying relevant.

What pulled you back into the home and lifestyle business after taking time off?
The pull back into the home and lifestyle business came from a deep-seated passion for creating spaces that reflect individuality and comfort. After time away, I realised how much I missed the joy of curating experiences and products that enhance daily living. Additionally, the desire to contribute positively to people's environments and foster a sense of home became a driving force. Observing trends evolve and recognising the growing interest in personalised home spaces inspired me to re-engage with this field. Ultimately, it felt like a natural progression to return to something that aligns so closely with my values and interests, allowing me to blend creativity with a purpose.

You love to travel. How do the places you visit influence the items you choose for your store and your own home?
Travelling exposes me to diverse cultures, aesthetics, and design philosophies that greatly influence my selections for the store and my home. Each destination offers unique materials, craftsmanship, and colour palettes that spark



inspiration. For instance, visiting markets in Morocco might introduce me to vibrant textiles, while the minimalism of Scandinavian design can influence how I curate functional, stylish pieces. These experiences encourage me to incorporate a global perspective, blending different styles to create a cohesive vibe.

As a mother of three and a business owner, how do you manage your time and keep your family life steady?
Balancing motherhood and business require intention and flexibility. I focus on clear priorities to manage my time effectively while staying present at home and work. Making space for self-care, even in small ways, helps me recharge. Embracing unpredictability and staying open to change allows me to navigate challenges with balance and clarity.

How would you describe your personal style when it comes to decorating your home and choosing your outfits?
My personal style is a blend of modern and contemporary, reflecting comfort, functionality and creativity. When it comes to outfits, I gravitate towards casual chic. I love pieces that are comfortable yet stylish. Overall, my style is about creating spaces and looks that feel authentic and resonate with warmth and individuality.

Where are your favourite places to shop for home accents and furniture, whether in Nigeria or abroad?
I have several favourite places for sourcing home accents and furniture, both in Nigeria and abroad, that help me create spaces filled with warmth and character. In Nigeria, Lekki Market stands out for its vibrant selection of handcrafted décor, textiles, and unique pieces. I also enjoy visiting local artisan markets, where handmade pottery and woven items add a personal, authentic touch. When sourcing abroad, Etsy is a go-to platform for one-of-a-kind handmade pieces from global artisans. West Elm is another favourite for its modern designs and sustainable materials. Whenever I travel, I visit local markets to find items that reflect culture and craftsmanship, helping me build a meaningful and personal home.

Why the name Mai Haven, and when people hear the name, what do you hope for it to resonate with them?
The name "Mai Haven" reflects a sense of comfort and sanctuary. "Mai" suggests a personal touch, implying that each piece is thoughtfully curated for the individual. "Haven" evokes a feeling of safety, warmth, and a retreat from the outside world, essentially a place where one can feel at home. When people hear the name, I hope it resonates as a space that celebrates personal style and individuality. I want them to feel that they can find unique, meaningful items that enhance their living spaces and reflect their personalities. The name is meant to convey that every item in the store contributes to creating a comforting environment, turning a house into a true home. Ultimately, I aspire for "Mai Haven" to evoke feelings of joy and inspiration, inviting customers to explore and discover pieces that resonate with their own stories and aesthetics.

What kinds of home goods does Mai Haven stock?
At Mai Haven, we stock items that help elevate your home. For example, towels, vases, bedside lamps, rugs, silk pyjamas, scented candles, to name a few.

What home décor or trends are you most excited for people to explore at your stores' relaunch?
I am most excited for people to explore the varied décor pieces we have available—especially our extra-large mirrors.

What advice would you give to women who want to build a warm home, run a business, and still maintain their personal style?
Building a warm home while running a business and maintaining personal style can be rewarding but challenging. The key is being intentional and kind to yourself. Create a welcoming home with décor, photos, or art that reflects your personality. Practice balance by managing your time wisely, making room for work, family, self-care, and creativity. Do not let your personal style fade. Choose versatile wardrobe pieces and use accessories to express who you are. Stay flexible, as some seasons will demand more focus on business than others. Prioritise self-care to support your physical, emotional, and mental well-being. Finally, celebrate small wins and acknowledge your progress, as these moments help you stay motivated and true to your style.

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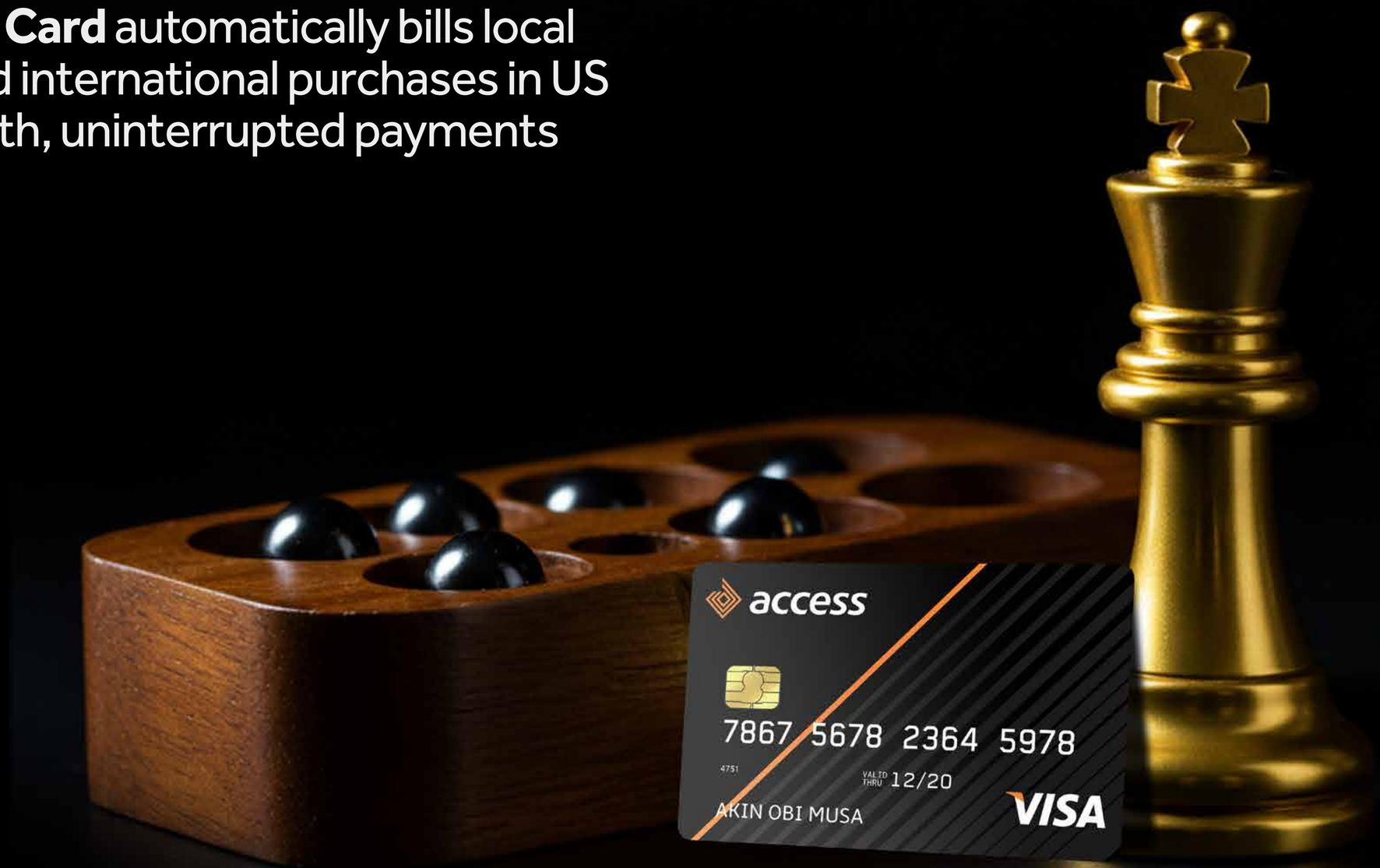

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BABAJIDE OLUSOLA

SANWO-OLU

LEADING LAGOS

BY **KONYE CHELSEA** NWABOGOR

COVER

Lagos is a city that pushes, stretches, and demands constant problem-solving from the people who lead it, and since taking office in 2019, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu has had to navigate those pressures in real time — from floods and gridlock to the daily expectations of more than 20 million residents who rely on government decisions to keep the city functional. Through it all, Lagosians have seen a governor who is consistently on the move, visibly working, and deeply engaged with the people he serves.

What has defined his administration is a deliberate attempt to bring order, coordination, and long-term structure to a state that moves faster than most places in the world. Central to that effort is THEMES, his developmental blueprint for Lagos State — an acronym for Transportation & Traffic Management, Health & Environment, Education & Technology, Making Lagos a 21st Century Economy, Entertainment & Tourism, and Security & Governance. Its evolution into THEMES+ adds a wider social lens, emphasising Social Inclusion, Gender Equality, and Youth Empowerment in a "no one left behind" approach. For many Lagosians, this is where his steady, system-driven leadership is most visible.

But Lagos is more than infrastructure and systems. It is also the continent's creative heartbeat — a city where music, fashion, art, nightlife, film, and digital culture shape not only identity but economic possibility. Under Sanwo-Olu, that creative pulse has been taken seriously as part of the state's development strategy. The rise of Lagos as a year-round tourism and cultural destination — especially the now globally recognised Detty December season — reflects a government willing to treat culture not as entertainment alone, but as a genuine driver of jobs, investment, and city branding.

These transformations, both structural and cultural, frame the larger questions about leadership in today's Lagos — questions only the governor himself can answer.

In this exclusive interview, he speaks to Konye Chelsea Nwabogor on those early challenges, the decisions behind THEMES+, the weight of governing a city this complex, and Lagos' growing identity as a cultural and tourism powerhouse. It is a candid conversation about the work that happens behind the scenes — the long days, the constant pressure, the moments of connection with ordinary Lagosians — and what he hopes they will ultimately take away from his time in office.

So when you assumed office in 2019, what did you quickly recognise about Lagos that shaped your early priorities?

Quite frankly, the size of the city, the intensity, and the enormous responsibility that came with it hit me immediately. We were sworn in around the end of May, which was the peak of the rainy season. By June, flooding had already started. There was no time to sit back, reflect, or ease into the job. You had to roll up your sleeves and get to work immediately. At the same time, there was the Apapa traffic gridlock. The whole city was practically at a standstill. Coming straight from the campaign trail—where you've spent months discussing policy frameworks, economic plans, and growth targets—you suddenly find yourself dealing with refuse evacuation, traffic management, flooding, and road decongestion. There was no room for high-level strategy meetings at that point. It was all hands on deck. People were already reaching out by the second week. You had to

be on the streets, giving instructions, clearing drainages, freeing up roads, and responding to emergencies. That was also how I got to know the officers and line managers responsible for different areas. It wasn't classroom leadership or office-based learning—it was leadership on the streets of Lagos. That experience gave me a firsthand understanding of the density, pressure, and intensity of the city.

So you basically hit the ground running. What was that period like for you?

There was a lot of energy. And so, if you remember, that was when they were calling me 'pointing governor'. But I was actually saying to them, "What is going on here? Why can't this one move? Why are we here?" And that for me was me expressing, giving instructions, or giving clarity. And then you hear all sorts of names, even within your first month. This one is clueless. This one will not be able to clear the streets. This one will not be able to manage. So yeah, that early period was intense, challenging, and real. It forced immediate action rather than long introductions or ceremonial inspection.

What indicators matter to you when you are assessing if quality of life has improved amongst your people?

One of the first things you see is the ability to absorb shocks. It means that people are progressing somehow. The resilience in Lagos is critical.

Then, there is also the spending power. You see that Lagosians, no matter what it is, you bring in anything, clearly they can survive. There is that spending power that Lagosians have. There is that economic independence that Lagosians have, that we know that with or without government, they will do well on their own

So apart from heavy infrastructure, you can clearly see some of those indicators of people doing well. I don't want to use the word lifestyle, but based on the fact that they can continue to earn a living. They can stay resilient. They can commit themselves to whatever they find their hands doing, and they do it very well. Be it a small trader who wants to move from selling one whole tree of roasted plantain to having it in two or three other places, or just doubling that sale. That, for me, is growth for that person.

Let's talk about tourism and the creative economy. At what point did you decide to be very deliberate about it?

From day one ! Under the THEMES agenda (now THEMES Plus), the last E is for Entertainment and Tourism. So we were intentional from day one. On the THEMES agenda, the "E," the second "E" in THEMES, is entertainment and tourism. So we knew that part of our deliverables as a government was to look at the verticals of entertainment and tourism and identify what we needed to do differently.

And you know, the other reason why I say from day one is that tourism was actually the first ministry where, for the first time, I had three commissioners. So our intentionality was from day one. Our economic policy reflects it. The entertainment industry in Lagos, as far as we knew, was huge. The potentials were there. We needed to sit with them and see how we could be strong enablers for the entertainment space—music, fashion, arts, and all of it.

On the tourism side, it was also about opening up that industry, that sector. What are the things that help tourism—hotel businesses, airport issues, restaurants, and the rest of it? Everything that can make an experience work.

So we started meetings. We had conversations. Some rules at the time were strictly national, some were subnational. But a few of those things have now changed, where both national and subnational governments can act. So it's a lot better.

Talking about Detty December now, the momentum starts from late November to mid-January. What are you doing intentionally as a state to take the experience beyond this period?

We're working on calendarisation—spreading activities throughout the year: Easter, mid-year periods, conferences, exhibitions, and training programmes. December is attractive partly because of the diaspora returning home and the weather differences globally. That's fine, but Lagos must be a destination all year round.

We're attracting conferences, exhibitions, and meetings. We're offering concessions, engaging immigration authorities on visa processes, and supporting large groups coming into the state. Some organisations approach us with visa requests for hundreds of people, and we intervene to ensure smooth entry. Planning and intentionality are key.

Let's talk about E1. What was the intention behind Lagos getting involved?

We were lucky. We got into a room where conversations were ongoing earlier in the year. E1 itself is a sport activity. It's a global sport that is under five years old. They were intentional about growing in developing nations. For the first time, they were looking for an African city and had four cities on their map. Once we got into the room, we said we wouldn't let that opportunity slip. We were deliberate and quick to make commitments and ensure we met and exceeded their requirements.

For us, it was intentional. It was also about ensuring the Lagos story could be told using E1.

Other players may have had security perceptions or other metrics, but those are perceptions. When you calm down and engage, you correct them. We were able to convince and assure them that Lagos had all it takes to organise a world-class sporting event. History judged us. We turned out to be the very best in 2025—beyond expectations in quality, reach, and participation.

People can criticise you if there's a need, and you should take criticism positively. You maintain a digital presence on social media so you can understand how people perceive your government, what you're doing right, and what you need to fix.

It wasn't meant to be financially rewarding. But the awareness the city got, locally and internationally, was beyond the organisers' expectations.

So, will E1 continue in Lagos?

Yes. How it works is that, at first, you enter into a three- to five-year agreement. So yes, it will happen next year and the year after.

At least for the next three years, E1 is secured for Lagos.

How do you stay grounded in a high-paced city like Lagos?

By ensuring that I'm connected with the people. Ensuring that you don't have any airs around you. That you can relate with ordinary people.

You make yourself available. Everywhere you go, people want to take pictures with you. You make yourself available for selfies. You make sure you can have three to five-minute conversations with real people.

You can pick things in those three or four sentences that none of your aides will tell you. You listen to them, pick up their comments, hear their requests about your government, and use that to plan your next activities.

The other way is ensuring that your government is open. Open to public service, open to feedback. People can criticise you if there's a need, and you should take criticism positively.

You maintain a digital presence on social media so you can understand how people perceive your government, what you're doing right, and what you need to fix. Because if you say government is for the people, then you need to be out there—working, listening, and engaging.

We also try to unwind with them sometimes. That's why social, cultural, and heritage events are important. I attend as many as I can to interact with people and give them a sense of togetherness and connection.

What part of the city's evolution excites you, not just as governor, but as someone who lives in Lagos?

I'd say everywhere. The easiest answer would be Ikoyi or Victoria Island, but go to Surulere and see how the nightlife is thriving. Go to Alimosho. Alimosho is a new growth area with one of the largest populations. With the road connectivity we've done there, you see movement—average family men, families creating a new ecosystem of life for themselves.

Every part of Lagos has its own unique identity. Ikeja has its own flavour. There are people who live in Ikeja and say they have no business going to the Island, and that's fine for them.

As governor, I see different parts and appreciate what makes each place tick. I try to relate to them in their own spaces. I cannot be governor for one place. I have to be governor for all.

The growth has been beyond our expectation in the last six years. Post-COVID, Lagos became a place where people found comfort and opportunity. It's grown on an immeasurable scale.

When people look back at your time in office, what areas do you want them to feel changed the most?

It depends on who you ask.

Some people will say they just want the government to ensure they can move from one place to another safely. Security of life and property is one of the things we promised, and we believe we've done fairly well.

There hasn't been any reported bank robbery in Lagos in the last five years. That's true.

Another area is the youth population. We've empowered over 100,000 young people in one form or another—through grants, support, and direct intervention. We believe many of them will grow into business owners in the next five to ten years.

If I meet someone ten years from now who says, "Governor, you may not remember me, but you gave me ₦100,000 or ₦200,000 and see what it has become," that would be heart-warming.

It wouldn't also be bad if people remember that during our time, we built skyscrapers that changed the skyline of Lagos. COVID came, and we managed it. There are several things people will remember.

But as leaders, what we always pray for is that institutions are strengthened.

As a person, how would you like to be remembered?

I would like to be remembered as someone who gave his all, without regrets. Someone who meant well for everyone, regardless of their background. Someone who helped people move to their next level and made Lagos better.

Any idea what the next chapter will be like?

I'm very spiritual. God will help. But first, I want to rest. Politics is interesting, and I've given almost 25 years of my life to it since 2002. By 2027, it will be 25 years. So yes, I deserve rest.

And whatever comes next should not be about what I want, but about what people want. That should be the driving force. Leadership should be organic. You will make mistakes. But once intentions are genuine, you learn, you improve, and you continue to give your very best.

HOW TO SURVIVE DETTY DECEMBER WITHOUT BURNING OUT

Detty December looks like pure vibes on Instagram, but the real veterans know the truth: it can quietly drain your body, your wallet, and your sanity long before Christmas Day even shows up. Lagos nights stretch endlessly, traffic steals hours you'll never get back, everyone wants to "just link up small," and suddenly you're exhausted by the second week of December. The irony is that December is meant to be the reward after a long year, not another thing you have to survive. With a bit of intention, you can still enjoy the season without burning out before it even peaks.

By **Funke Babs Kufeji**

Know Your Limits Before the Month Starts

You genuinely don't have to attend everything. Every invite is not compulsory, no matter how good it looks on someone else's timeline. Decide early what actually matters to you: close friends' gatherings, family traditions, and one or two events you genuinely look forward to every year.

Rest Like It Is Part of the Plan

Sleep is always the first thing to suffer once December begins. One night out turns into three, and suddenly your body is running on fumes. Build rest into your plans deliberately. An evening at home with good food, low lights, music, and silence can do more for you than another night out you're attending out of obligation.

Eat Properly Before You Go Out

Parties are rarely the place to rely on for real nourishment. Eat something solid before you step out. Not snacks, not vibes — actual food. A proper meal keeps your energy steady, stops irritability, and helps you pace yourself through the night. You'll drink more responsibly, stay clearer headed, and avoid that sudden exhaustion that turns a fun night into a miserable one.

Keep Your Money in Check

Detty December has a way of turning "just one drink" into an expensive evening. Between tickets, transport, food, and spontaneous spending, money disappears quickly. Decide your limits before the month carries you away. You don't need to impress anyone with reckless spending. The real flex is enjoying December and still being financially okay when January shows up.

Hydrate Like an Adult

Water deserves respect this season. It keeps headaches away, helps your skin survive late nights, and keeps you mentally present enough to enjoy where you are. Alternate drinks with water and listen to your body. Staying hydrated doesn't make the night less fun; it makes the next day survivable.

Protect Your Peace

Crowds can be exciting, but they can also be draining. Pay attention to how you feel in certain spaces. If the noise, the people, or the energy starts to overwhelm you, step outside or leave entirely.
You don't owe anyone your discomfort. Protecting your peace is not being difficult; it's being self-aware.

Mind Your Calendar, Not Just Your Mood

December fills up fast. Before you know it, you've agreed to three things on the same day and convinced yourself you'll "manage." Look at your calendar regularly and create space on purpose.
Leave some nights intentionally empty. Those open evenings give your body time to recover and your mind room to breathe. Sometimes, the best decision you make all season is staying in.

Pace Your Social Battery

Loving people doesn't mean your energy is unlimited. Some days, brunch plus one night event is more than enough. Not every day needs to stretch until dawn. Knowing when to stop before exhaustion sets in is wisdom. You don't need to prove stamina; you need to protect yourself.

Dress for Comfort, Not Just Aesthetics

December outfits look great online, but comfort matters when you're standing for hours, stuck in traffic, or hopping between venues. Choose clothes and shoes you can actually move, sit, and breathe in.
Comfort keeps your mood intact. When your body feels good, everything else feels lighter.

Lower the Pressure to Be "On"

You don't have to be bubbly, loud, or socially switched on at every event. It's okay to enjoy your drink quietly, observe the room, and leave early without explanations.
December doesn't require performance. It just asks that you be present in a way that feels good to you.

Share the Load

December is busy enough without doing everything alone. If you're hosting, ask friends to bring something. If you're attending, carpool when possible. Sharing responsibilities reduces stress and makes the season feel more communal — the way December is supposed to feel.

Accept That You Will Miss Some Things

You cannot attend everything, see everyone, or be everywhere. Something will always be happening somewhere else. Make peace with that early. Enjoy where you are instead of scrolling through what you're not. Detty December is sweeter when you're present enough to actually remember it.

THE LAGOS GIRL'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING DETTY DECEMBER DATING

Detty December is not just a month in Lagos; it's a season, a lifestyle choice, and sometimes a spiritual battle. The sun is hotter, the prices are ruder, and somehow, people who ghosted you in April magically reappear with "Hey stranger, you dey Lagos?" energy. Every night has the potential to become a movie, a documentary, or a cautionary tale your friends will remind you of for months. It's the one period where you can meet someone at Amala Sky, run into them again at a rooftop party in Ikoyi, and bump into them yet again at Oniru beach — and still not know their real age, real job, or real surname. Dating in Lagos is already an extreme sport; Detty December is simply the Olympics version.
But you can still enjoy it — with sense, softness, and small street wisdom. Here's the realistic, grounded, Lagos-truthful guide to dating this season.

1. Remember That Everyone Is Their "Festive Best Self" in December

People shine a little brighter in December, and that includes their personalities. Someone who seems effortlessly social and available this month may return to a quieter, less responsive version of themselves when January responsibilities kick in again. Instead of assuming that December charisma equals long-term chemistry, take a moment to watch how they behave when the noise dies down. It saves you from falling for someone's holiday highlight reel instead of their real-life habits.

2. Take Your Time Before Deciding Someone Is a Perfect Match

The energy in Lagos during December makes it easy to believe that a single great evening means you've found your person. But connections formed under strobe lights, loud music, and plenty of adrenaline can be misleading. Give yourself the space to enjoy the excitement without rushing into assumptions. If the vibe is real, it will continue outside the festive atmosphere; if it's not, you lose nothing by slowing down.

3. Ask Genuine Questions—Curiosity Is Not Stressful, It's Smart

In a season where everyone seems to be floating from one event to another, it's surprisingly easy to overlook the basics. Ask simple, grounding questions about who they are, what they do, and what their life actually looks like beyond the holiday circuit. These conversations are not heavy; they simply ensure you're connecting with a real person and not an Instagram persona created for December aesthetics. Understanding someone's everyday rhythm gives you a clearer picture of whether you can genuinely align.

4. Let Your Friends Interact With the Person Early

Your friends have a way of seeing things you might miss when you're caught up in the excitement of a new connection. Introducing someone you like to your circle allows you to observe how they interact in a comfortable, unfiltered environment. Friends pick up tone, energy, and inconsistencies in ways you may not. They're also your safety net when navigating December's unpredictable social calendar, and their opinions—whether big or subtle—can be incredibly grounding.

5. Don't Allow Logistics and Traffic Excuses to Become Their Personality

Dating in Lagos comes with an extra layer of "I'm on the way" culture, especially during December. Yes, traffic is real, and yes, Uber surge pricing can be outrageous, but a person who genuinely wants to see you will still find ways to show up. If every plan they suggest is chaotic, last-minute, or constantly falling apart, it may be a sign that they're not prioritising you. December is unpredictable, but effort is always noticeable.

6. Avoid Confusing Fast Familiarity for Emotional Depth
It's easy to bond quickly in December because everything feels amplified—music is louder, laughs land harder, and emotions feel slightly heightened by the energy in the city. But quick comfort doesn't always equal real compatibility. Give the connection time to settle. See how it feels when it's quiet, when you're not surrounded by lights and music, and when you're both in normal environments. Real emotional depth unfolds over time, not just over cocktails and concerts.

7. Prioritise Safety Without Feeling Like You're Being Paranoid

More strangers, more parties, and more movement mean you need to be more mindful. Make plans in public spaces, share your location with someone you trust, and pay attention to your intuition if something feels off. Enjoying the holiday season doesn't mean you turn off your instincts. You can have fun and still be cautious—and that balance is what keeps the memories sweet instead of stressful.

8. Spend Wisely and Don't Perform a Lifestyle You Can't Sustain

December has a way of convincing people to spend beyond their comfort zone, especially when dating is involved. Stay generous if you want to, but don't start acting like a co-sponsor of Detty December. The right person will appreciate simplicity and thoughtfulness, not unnecessary extravagance. Financial balance is one of the most underrated forms of emotional intelligence.

9. Let Yourself Enjoy Connections Without Demanding a Future From Them

Not every interesting person you meet in December is meant to become a partner. Some connections are meant to be fun, fleeting, or simply part of your holiday story. Allow yourself to enjoy the moment without attaching heavy expectations to it. When you stay present, you make room for genuine interactions instead of forcing meaning where there isn't any.

10. Trust Your Intuition Even When the Lights Are Pretty and the Music Is Loud

If something feels too rushed, too vague, or too inconsistent, there's usually a reason. Your intuition has a way of picking up signals even when your emotions are distracted by the energy of the season. Listen to it. It will save you from misunderstandings, disappointment, and situations that don't serve you.

CHIKA EMOLE

WHAT TO WEAR FOR NEW YEAR LUNCH

What exactly do you wear on a day that sits comfortably between last year's chaos and this year's fresh energy? A day that involves long conversations, refilling plates, clinking glasses, reflecting, laughing, and definitely taking pictures because new year, new vibe. The sweet spot is relaxed polish—outfits that feel intentional without feeling try-hard. Here's your New Year lunch styling guide, the one that understands that comfort and confidence are non-negotiable.

Fresh, Polished, Not Overdone

New Year lunch isn't about festive drama; it's about clean energy. Think crisp silhouettes, light shine, and colours that feel optimistic rather than loud. Soft whites, creams, beige, pale blue, sage green, butter yellow, blush, or even black styled softly all work beautifully.
Instead of sequins, go for texture: linen with structure, satin with movement, silk blends, light knits, or airy cotton dresses. A fluid midi dress, a well-cut two-piece, or a relaxed wrap dress sets the tone. You want to look like you stepped into the new year calm, centred, and stylish—not like you're still dressed for last night's countdown.


EMELDA RUFAI


NGOZI AKINTUJOYE

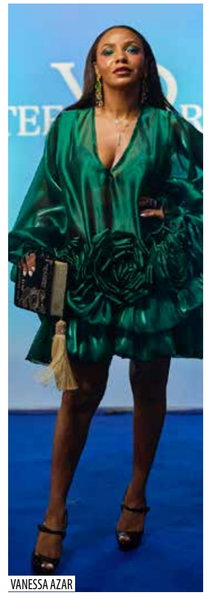
Comfort Is Still the Main Character

New Year lunch usually stretches longer than planned. There's sitting, standing, leaning into conversations, reaching for drinks, and maybe a second plate you didn't plan for. Choose outfits that forgive movement.
Elasticated waistbands that don't look elasticated, wrap styles, wide-leg trousers, relaxed tailoring, or flowy dresses are your best friends. Breathable fabrics matter—nothing stiff, clingy, or heavy. By 4 p.m., you should still feel put together, not desperate to change.

Jewellery That Feels Intentional

This is not the day for noisy accessories. New Year lunch jewellery should feel clean and thoughtful. Gold or silver hoops, a simple pendant, layered chains, stud earrings, or one sculptural piece that adds interest without screaming. The goal is subtle shine—the kind that catches the light during conversation, not competes with it. If your outfit is minimal, let the jewellery add personality. If your outfit already has texture or colour, keep accessories restrained.


TIWA SAVAGE


VANESSA AZAR

Shoes You Can Spend the Day In

Unless lunch is at a formal restaurant, practicality wins. Block heels, kitten heels, chic flats, soft mules, or stylish sandals are perfect. Pointed-toe flats instantly elevate a simple dress or trousers, while low heels keep things polished without punishment.
New Year lunch is not the moment to suffer for fashion. Choose shoes that let you walk, stand, and linger comfortably—because rushing home defeats the whole point.

Hair & Makeup: Soft, Clean, Effortless

Think fresh start beauty. Dewy skin, light bronzer, mascara, groomed brows, and a lip colour that survives drinks and conversation. Nothing heavy, nothing overly sculpted.
Hair should feel neat but natural: a sleek low bun, soft waves, a half-up style, or a simple braid. You want to look like yourself—just refreshed, rested, and ready for what's ahead.

The Unofficial Rule: Dress for Ease

New Year lunch is reflective. People talk about plans, hopes, lessons, and laughter comes easy. Wear something that lets you lean in, hug freely, and stay present. Soft fabrics. Easy silhouettes. Nothing restrictive or fussy. Style is important—but ease, confidence, and comfort are what really set the tone for the year ahead.

DISCIPLINE, DEPTH, AND DISCOVERY... A PEEK INSIDE PLAATJIES'S VISUAL WORLD

From hockey pitches to studio spaces, Simhle Belinda Plaatjies channels her energy and experience into art that captures both movement and stillness.

By **Okechukwu Uwaezuoke**

Dusk was settling over Victoria Island on Saturday, December 13, when Simhle Belinda Plaatjies arrived at one of the four venues of the month-long ARTFrikanity Art Festival in Lagos. She was in the company of Nonka Mbonambi, another South African artist; Tracy-Lee Rosslind, host of the African Fashion & Arts Awards (AFAA) in Abuja; and Lebo Moroe, wife of South Africa's Consul General in Lagos, Bobby Moroe. It was not a grand entrance, yet it drew notice all the same.

Plaatjies did not announce herself. She didn't need to. Poised and cheerful, she smiled warmly at those she passed, drawing attention without seeking it.

There was a quiet confidence in her manner, free from the sharp edges often associated with public figures accustomed to scrutiny.

She appeared fully present, attentive, and unhurried—a subtle composure that spoke as loudly as any gesture.

Her outfit spoke for itself. The bright pink dress, dotted with bold blue circles, struck a playful note without ever feeling theatrical. A bow at the neckline and a softly gathered hem gave the silhouette a light, buoyant elegance. Pink statement earrings framed her face, while a vivid yellow clutch added a touch of surprise, hinting that seriousness and joy could coexist effortlessly.

Her hair, intricately braided and swept into a sculptural updo, carried a quiet sense of structure. Minimal, natural make-up allowed her expression to remain the focus. Behind her, large sculptures and framed artworks depicting stylised figures—dancers frozen mid-gesture—lined the space, echoing her own relationship with movement and form. Plaatjies seemed entirely at ease, as if the gallery were less a venue and more an extension of her own rhythm.

For years, the 31-year-old South African has been defined by motion. Competitive hockey, where reflex and stamina rule. Fitness work honed by discipline. Television spaces shaped by timing, posture, and presence.

Speed and visibility have long marked her public life. What often goes unnoticed, however, is her deliberate embrace of stillness.

Art did not arrive early or announce itself as destiny. There were no childhood easels or tales of precocious talent. Instead, it came quietly during the 2020 lockdown, when the familiar rhythms of professional sport were suspended. In that pause, Plaatjies discovered something essential. "Art became serious when it became sanctuary," she says. "It wasn't just something to do. It was somewhere to go."

What began as a refuge soon took shape as practice. The canvas became a space for reflection, a way to process disorder and find clarity. "After my career in hockey," she reflects, "the canvas gave me room for healing and self-discovery. It became the language through which I translate the world's chaos into peace." Art was no longer optional; it had become necessary—a lived rhythm linking creativity and wellness.

Despite the quiet of the studio, Plaatjies's work demands endurance. The habits shaped by elite sport—repetition, stamina, focus—have carried over seamlessly into her artistic practice. She favours large-scale charcoal and pastel portraits, pieces that require both physical engagement and conceptual precision. "The discipline of the athlete is the discipline of the artist," she says. "These works demand commitment. You don't finish them unless you stay with the process."

At times, the creative process mirrors competition. "There are moments when I have to dig deep into my last reserves of energy," she admits, "like when there's only ten minutes left on the clock." Each mark is deliberate, charged with intent. While the subjects may lean toward the spiritual or ethereal, the body remains fully engaged in their making.

Her environment has shaped her work. Cape Town, where she grew up, offered early lessons in visual poetry: mountains pressing against the sky, the ocean insisting on scale. "Cape Town grounded me," she recalls. "I was surrounded by family and a landscape that teaches humility." That sense of vastness, tempered by intimacy, continues to linger in her art.

Johannesburg came later, bringing a different rhythm. Where Cape Town offered grounding, Johannesburg delivered velocity—migration, ambition, reinvention. "Joburg gave me the hustle and the texture," she says. "I explored many different aspects of myself there." Her art now carries both cities within it: the lyricism of Cape Town rendered with the fire of Johannesburg.

In a life so often shaped by visibility, the studio functions as a retreat rather than a stage. Sport and media are public performances, governed by projection and scrutiny. The studio operates on a different rhythm. "Sport and media are the public performance," Plaatjies says. "Art is the private communion." Only once a piece is complete does it turn outward. "Once the work is finished," she adds, "it becomes intentional communication—a visual tool to spark reflection and solace in the viewer."

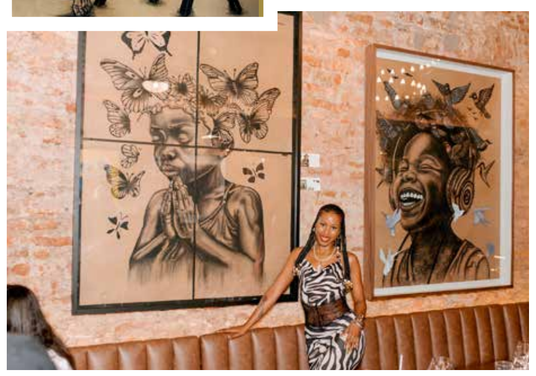
That inward turn is especially potent for a young woman whose image is often mediated by others. "The camera owns the narrative," she notes. On the canvas, she reclaims it. "My art is my ultimate act of authorship. I own the lens." Her portraits—particularly those of African women and deities—are meditations on power rather than surface beauty. "They're about inherent strength," she insists, "not just aesthetics."

New works emerge intuitively, as sensations or what she calls "ancestral echoes." "It's like an instruction—to capture a particular spirit or truth about the African narrative," she explains.

Creation becomes translation: the invisible made tangible, personal growth braided with collective memory.

Looking ahead, Plaatjies defines her ambition by impact rather than style. "I'm becoming the artist who bridges art and wellness globally," she says. She hopes to shift focus from what art is to what it does—how it heals, anchors, and empowers, encouraging the next generation of African creators to claim their truth without apology.

At ARTFrikanity, amid the hum of conversation and curatorial debate, Plaatjies embodied that ethos. In a culture obsessed with surfaces and speed, her practice insists on depth. Her art does not shout; it listens. And in that listening lies its quiet, persuasive power.



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