

## BUSINESS CASE • BENIN

# Akpan: A childhood memory reinvented for the future

**Yannelle Minoungou, Founder of Yan'île**



### Brief overview of the traditional fermented food product

**Akpan** is a traditional cereal-based fermented product, valued for its smooth, yoghurt-like consistency. Cereals used are mainly maize, with a small amount of sorghum. Akpan is predominantly consumed in Benin and across West Africa, just after lunch, or as a refreshing snack between lunch and dinner. It is mainly produced in the south of Benin as a street food.

Traditional akpan production is often characterised by non-standardised processes, particularly in fermentation and cooking, which can affect product consistency and quality. Moreover, its short shelf life presents challenges for larger-scale distribution, making innovation and quality improvement essential for its long-term development.



## Food Processor

Yan'ile was founded by **Yannelle Minoungou**, a Beninese entrepreneur with a master's degree in law and a strong passion for food processing and the promotion of local products. After completing her studies in France, she returned home to contribute to her country's development. Driven by nostalgia for the childhood snacks that shaped her early years, she sought out akpan, a beloved local dessert. What she found, however, were two main challenges: the product was not always available, and when it was, production conditions were often unhygienic.

From this realisation emerged her vision: to offer consumers in Benin an akpan that is consistently available, produced and packaged according to strict hygiene and safety standards, while preserving its cultural authenticity. Inspired by the idea of introducing this local delicacy to a wider audience, particularly foreigners, she also began innovating by incorporating fruit compotes into the traditional recipe.

The journey began modestly, with just 1 kg of maize and two flavours (mango and pineapple) that she shared with friends. Encouraged by enthusiastic feedback, she decided to test the market at a local fair. The response was overwhelming: in just two days, she sold 270 of the 300 jars produced, confirming both the demand and the potential of her idea.

This success marked the official launch of Yan'ile, which has now been delighting consumers for six years. Today, Yan'ile continues to grow as a brand committed to modernising traditional flavours, ensuring quality, and sharing the richness of Beninese gastronomy with a wider audience.





## Value Chain

<b>RAW MATERIAL PRODUCERS</b>	Cultivate maize and manage drying, shelling and storage.
<b>COLLECTORS</b>	Purchase maize from farmers, dry and store it, then sell it in smaller batches to Yan'ile.
<b>PROCESSOR (YAN'ILE)</b>	Processes maize into akpan.
<b>MILLERS</b>	Transform the soaked maize grains provided by the processor into flour and return it to the processor.

## Quotes

### What are you most proud of in your business?

- ” What makes me most proud is the resilience and progress of this journey. Despite the obstacles, I am now close to reaching a dream I had at the very beginning: building a production unit that meets the highest standards and officially bringing Yan'ile to market.

### What would you like to do next in your business?

- ” My next ambition is to stabilise akpan so that it can travel beyond our borders and win over consumers in regional markets.

## Social media information and website

<b>FACEBOOK</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/YanileFoods?mibextid=ZbWKwL">www.facebook.com/YanileFoods?mibextid=ZbWKwL</a>
<b>INSTAGRAM</b>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/yanile_akpan/?igsh=c3gxb2VuMnhqMG4%3D#">www.instagram.com/yanile_akpan/?igsh=c3gxb2VuMnhqMG4%3D#</a>



## Gallery of Pictures



← Yan'ile founder  
Yannelle Minoungou

↓ The process includes harvesting, storage, milling, fermenting, cooking, cooling and packing”

