

ASALI

A Natural's Guide

ISSUE 1 | APRIL 2018

LONG LIVE THE QUEEN

*Up Close & Personal
with Nigeria's natural
hair queen, Chinwe
Juliet*



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EDITOR'S DESK

As the natural hair industry continues to grow in various beautiful dimensions, there is an even greater hunger for information. Naturals are beginning to understand the correlation between their new found love for natural haircare, and complete healthy living.

It is no longer a question of why should we care, it is a quest for why we must not sit ideally by, and let this ignorance consume us.

This is exactly the kind of community we wish to create with Asali; a guide with the questions you seek answers for, and a haven for celebrating our choices, no matter what they may be.

In this first issue, our contributors tackle the basics, breaking down how you should start, and simplifying the herculean task of changing your lifestyle to suit your new desires. From Health and fitness, to skincare, healthy haircare tips, and a very insightful interview with Nigeria's natural hair queen, this maiden edition opens up a door to many endless possibilities, of what we can do, when we believe in ourselves, and take a leap of faith, with the sheer audacity of hope, that no matter how afraid we may be, or how daunting the change may seem, we are never alone.

Welcome to Asali, the hub for a healthy new generation of changemakers!



IF YOU HAVE FOLLOWED THE NATURAL HAIR SCENE IN NIGERIA, THEN YOU DEFINATELY KNOW CHINWE OF IGBO CURLS. FROM A THRIVING BLOG, TO A VERY ENGAGING YOUTUBE CHANNEL WITH OVER 1MILLION VIEWS, TO GETTING HER VERY OWN HAIR APP FROM GOOGLE, SHE IS DEFINATELY THE REIGNING QUEEN OF NATURAL HAIR.



We caught up with Chinwe, to learn about her passion for this new, thriving industry, and why she keeps sharing what she knows with so much drive. Read on, and enjoy it.



My vision for A'akuba Naturals is to make it more than a beauty brand. I want people to hear the name and instantly associate it with a healthy lifestyle.

Asali: Please tell us a little about your business?

Chinwe: I started working in 2013 during NYSC as a teacher at a government secondary school in Kaduna. Soon after I finished, I tried blogging full-time but there were not that many resources in Nigeria that encouraged it, so I started working for a Steel firm while blogging part-time and that's where I am today.

Asali: When did you start your business?

Chinwe: My business started as an extension of my blog. Whenever I am asked the same questions or I see a gap in the market I go for it. It started with me making hair butters for people who requested it, to sourcing natural hair products and now building a healthy lifestyle company.

Entrepreneurship has always been in my blood. Watching my parents as a kid work day and night to provide for me and my siblings plus my “I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me” has always been, and will continue to be my motivation.



Never in a million years would I have thought I would have long hair, albeit long natural hair; but it happened and the questions as well as curiosity came, so I turned my passion into a career

Chinwe Juliet, Igbo Curls

Asali: What were some of the challenges you faced in starting this business and what did you do to overcome them?

Chinwe: I had to source the best ingredients for the products I wanted and that involved me travelling, researching and attending conferences while on a budget and it was not easy. Also finding good, reliable companies to partner with was also a challenge but I thank God for it all.

Asali: How does being connected to the world help you achieve your goals?

Chinwe: The internet is amazing. It has helped me connect meaningfully with people and businesses that would not have otherwise known me or my brand in such a short time.

Asali: Please tell us a story about how you had a problem with your business and how you overcame it?

Chinwe: One time we sent a package to a customer in Abuja and because she was being frugal, she decided she was going to pick it up from the local park. Unfortunately, the driver did not make it to Abuja until 8pm or so and decided to dump her goods with an unknown man at the park. I panicked when I heard but thank God I knew the Manager of the park who confirmed to me that the package was not missing and recovered it on time for her to pick it up the next day.

Asali: What's your go-to hairstyle?

Chinwe: 2 Flat Twisted plaits all day everyday. I feel buns make my face look weird.

Asali: What one product can't you do without?

Chinwe: Definitely a hair mist. My current favorite one is by Taliah Waajid. Their protective mist bodifier.

Asali: How did you get your app?

Chinwe: My App was nothing short of Gods miracle and Grace that follows us when we walk in our purpose. I just happened to be talking about what I do in an office that I had only been twice and a man walks up to me and asks me if he can have my web and contact details, that there was a project he is working on with Google and they would like what I do and that was it! A few months later, I get an email and everything becomes reality. Praise God!

Asali: Who is your fashion icon?

Chinwe: I just love Blake Lively. There is just something about her grace.

Asali: What is your favorite hair routine?

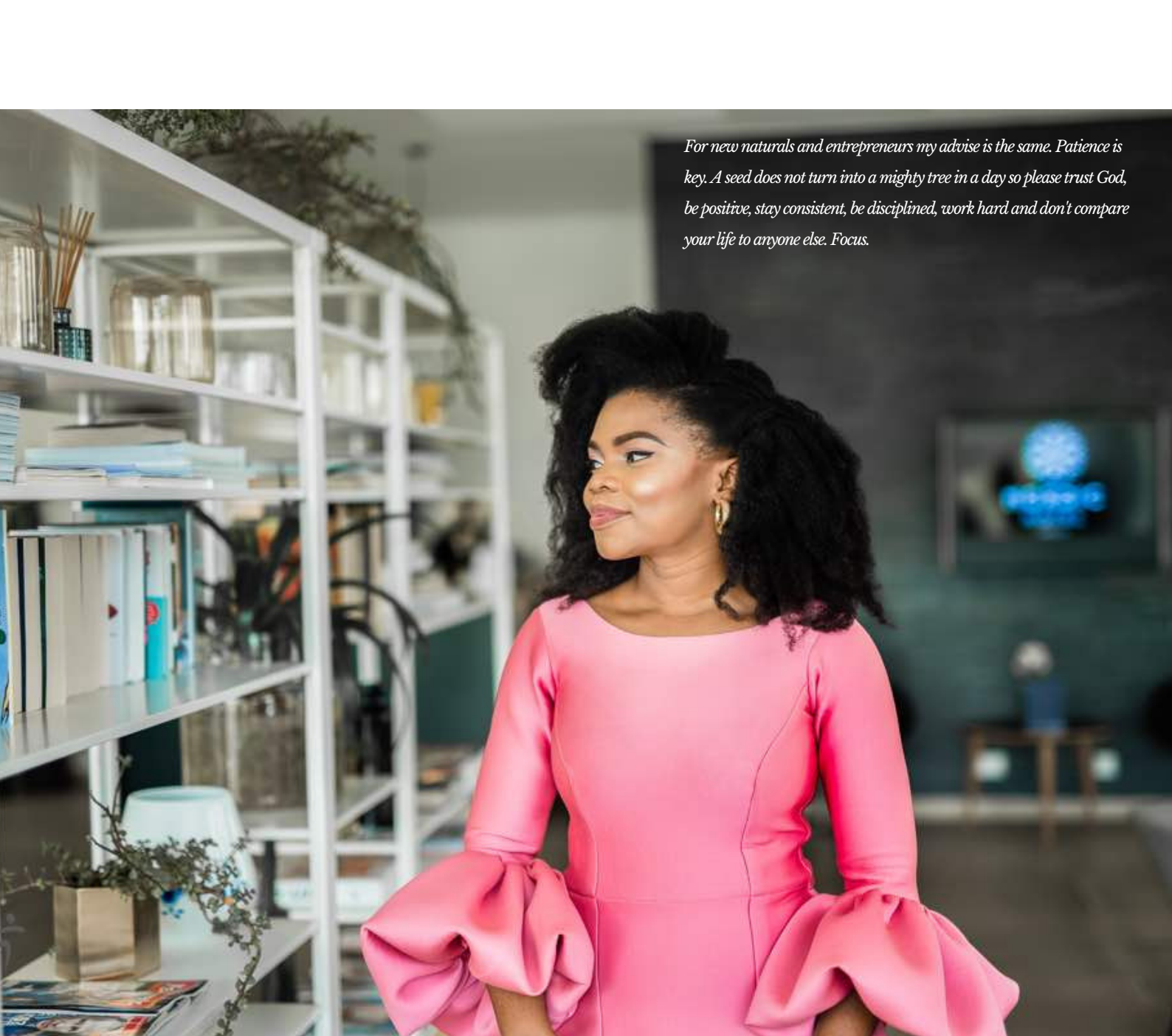
Chinwe: My favorite hair routine involves pre-pooing with either a butter mix or olive oil. Shampooing, deep conditioning with a steamer. Apple cider vinegar rinse and using leave in conditioner, hair moisturizer and an oil to seal.

Asali: Who is your hair crush?

Chinwe: @paging.dr.dre on Instagram. Her real name is Dr. Andrea Alexander and even though she's a doctor she still has time to care for her thick, full mane. She is such an inspiration. That's why I never understand when people give excuses about not having 'time' to care for their own hair.

Asali: Let's talk favorites; from food, music, color, quote to movies. What are yours?

Chinwe: My favorite kind of music to listen to is Soul. I like Pop and Afro-beats but I love lyrics more so I'd rather listen to what the artist is saying on a good day. My favorite food is rice and stew with plantain. my favorite color is blue and yellow. I used to love comedy, but now I love drama. I have many quotes I love but I just read this one from my Journal. "God is the limit of my ability. HE would not allow me think it, if I can't do it."

A woman with dark, curly hair styled in a high bun, wearing a bright pink, long-sleeved dress with large, puffed sleeves. She is standing in a room with white bookshelves filled with books and decorative items. The background is slightly blurred, showing a dark wall and a glowing blue neon sign.

For new naturals and entrepreneurs my advise is the same. Patience is key. A seed does not turn into a mighty tree in a day so please trust God, be positive, stay consistent, be disciplined, work hard and don't compare your life to anyone else. Focus.

I have gotten calls and emails of people who just pray for me and encourage me to keep on doing what I do. It always warms my heart and reassures me that I need to work harder.

The Advice

No new natural wants to hear

By

TheKinkAndI

But it's great advice that I have to share with you.

When I first decided to go natural some five years ago, I did not have such great expectations. Yes I had seen some naturals on the internet, but I didn't go in knowing or hoping for everything about their experience to apply to me. I had been talking about going natural for at least 18 months, I had come to the point where I just had to try it and see. I did not tell myself it was a decision for life. The mindset was, let me see how it goes, no pressure. 5 years after my big chop, I'm still here (Hallelujah!)

During this time, I have spoken to a good number of people who were frustrated with their hair, many of whom went back to relaxers within a year of going natural. They usually ask- "How do you do it?" I didn't know how to answer this question until recently, it hit me. I was only able to go through my first year natural because I did the least. Here's my answer: Leave your hair alone!

I cut off my relaxed ends just one month before I began the most demanding year of my life, the year I was in law school. At school, I combed my teeny weeny afro every day and when I needed a break, I wore kinky twists or the occasional weave. I didn't deliberately abstain from styling my natural hair, but I realized that my first attempt at styling ever was a year after my big chop! I didn't know how serious my shrinkage was. I didn't do length checks. I wasn't spending data watching YouTube tutorials and giving myself hair envy. Most importantly, I was happy and free. Where am I going with this and how can it help you? In hindsight, not styling in my first year of being natural helped me:

1. Be patient with my hair.

When you're looking for style inspiration, you come across so many different beautiful naturals that sometimes make you wish your hair was curlier or kinkier, longer, thicker, or less inclined to shrink. With no styling needs, wearing my hair in a TWA, I embraced shrinkage and by the time I encountered hair envy, I was better equipped to deal with it.

2. Learn what my hair really needed.

My hair was, as we like to say, "STRONG". It still is, to be honest. I got it from my mother, and grandmother. If I achieved anything in my first year of being natural, it was learning how to care for my hair. My hair was really dry and hard to deal with, so I spent a lot of time Googling and experimenting on Washday; figuring out how to get moisture into my hair and just as importantly, how to keep the moisture locked in.

3. Get used to my texture (took a while to get used to, but when it kicked in, hand in hair syndrome was real!)

So much of styling involves texture manipulation. It doesn't help that more often than not, we find ourselves looking to people with curlier textures for inspiration. They are the ones pictured on the styling products and ads of all the natural hair brands. Sub consciously, you may find yourself wishing your natural hair were curlier. Styling presents an opportunity to tweak that a bit. If you favour certain styles especially when longing for length, you could find yourself stretching your short hair often (watch out for heat damage!). Leaving my hair alone helped me get used to my kinky 4C texture as is. I wasn't 100% comfortable with it at first but soon enough, the more results I got out of learning my hair's basic needs, the more I fell more in love with my hair and soon couldn't keep my hands out of it!



4. Save money and time!

Keeping it simple with your hair by just fro'ing it will save you money and time that you would otherwise have spent styling with a professional or experimenting yourself. You'll also be spared the expense of running through puddings and soufflés and gels in search of the perfect styler to define your curls as you dream (never mind that most of them are no match for this tropical humid weather!)



5. Chill!

I know, I know. Natural hair is so much fun and this is part of the reason why you decided to return to your kinks and coils. What I'm trying to say here is that, it's a process. Knowing how to care for your hair should come first. Styling comes easy to some people but if you don't even know where to start, don't beat yourself up about it. When you're ready, you'll be ready. At your own pace, you WILL learn at least a few styles that work for you.



If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or frustrated by your own styling attempts or absolute lack of ideas of things to do with your hair, it's okay to take a step back and let a trained stylist hook you up. What you need to do personally, is FOCUS on the basics. Is your hair soft? Is it strong? What does your hair like? This could take a while to figure out so try not to sweat it! Feel free to reach for a wig or get braids done along the way. It's a journey, it's a process. Chill!

FIVE SIMPLE WAYS TO EAT BETTER, FOR HEALTHIER, LONGER HAIR

BY
Nkechi Oti

If you've been trying to live healthier for so long, but you keep finding yourself on the floor and back to square one, well, I have another great reason why you should get back up and stay motivated. Your hair!!!

Even if you won't do it for the amazing body, the stares you'll get as your friends say "wow, you look fabulous", even if you won't do it for your body to be healthier, at least do it for your hair. I know you'll think on the list of important reasons to get healthier your hair should rank lower than even your body's health, but women we are special. We love our hair. A woman could spend more on hair products than medications. Not only do I know this, as a pharmacist I have seen it happen a lot. It doesn't mean we are vain, it's just natural. In the definition of what's beautiful, besides a person's personality, the hair, skin and body are what's looked at.



But the real beauty and health of these three things, your hair, skin and body is actually dependent on what goes on beneath the surface. Let me take you some layers deep...

Your hair is a part of your body, it grows out from you, it is nourished and controlled by the laws of prioritisation that governs your body, basically your body's own internal survival instincts. Hair has a function, to help regulate temperature, protect from ultra-violet rays and to absorb certain hits to the head. So the body knows that it is important, however when compared to important organs like the liver and the kidney, it doesn't rank so high in importance, so in the event of scarce resources, your body will prioritize these major organs first and then if by chance anything is left, the hair would get it. This means your body could be producing substandard hair because it has substandard materials. That could be why your hair keeps breaking off, or it is not absorbing moisture. It could also be why you're having a lot of shedding and hair loss. It could be the reason that your hair is not growing fast enough.

If you're not properly nourished, your hair will suffer. How do you nourish yourself? I believe in being practical, here are 5 ways to nourish your body for longer, healthier hair:

1: Think RAW: You need to incorporate more raw foods to your diet. Veggies and fruits, especially your veggies. I know there are people that can go weeks, maybe even months before they eat a raw vegetable, and when they do, it'll probably be a carrot. Also the vegetables in your soups that are cooked to death do not count. You need to eat more variety of raw fruits and vegetables. Your body and hair needs this phytonutrient to produce better quality cells.

2: Think CONTENT: Every time you plate your meal, look at your plate. Does it look healthy, does it look colourful, is it the right size, and is there any junk there? Will it pass an Instagram foodie test (if you were to take a picture and share it on instagram, would healthy foodies approve?). You can start a photo food journal to help yourself assess this. Whenever you plate your food, take a picture. Review your food pics periodically.

3: Think HYDRATE: You probably already know that you need to drink enough water, it helps ensure that your body does not get dehydrated and starts looking for means to pull and conserve water. This is just a friendly reminder for you to drink more water. Aim for 3L daily, you may need more if you're big, sweat a lot and if the weather is hot.

4: Think SUPPLEMENTS: These are not a replacement for healthy eating, but they will assist to ensure that you are getting optimum nutrients, which you need. Get a good supplement, and remember to take it

5: Think VARIETY: There are foods that help with hair growth, this is because they are filled with great nutrients for your hair. If you keep eating the same thing always, you may miss out on these foods. Add things like nuts (almonds, peanuts, walnut), greens (ugu, spinach, kale), Greek yoghurt, Salmon and other fish, chicken, oats, our Nigerian soups, eggs, sweet potatoes, mushrooms etc.

These are simple things you can start today and your hair would definitely thank you.



**4 EASY WAYS
TO CARE
FOR YOUR SKIN
THIS SEASON**

With the weather changing to rain showers, the nights are shorter and the days are longer. The increased humidity in the atmosphere affects various skin types in different ways. Dry skin for example, will most likely flourish while oily to combination skin types might not appreciate the extra moisture and heat. So what can you do to take better care of your skin this season? Find 4 easy steps below:

1. Keep it clean

This point is particularly important to the oily and combination skin types. This season will lead to increased sweat and oil production which will have you looking like you've slathered oil all over your body and face. It might also lead to the emergence of troublesome heat rashes or worse, acne. So keep your skin regularly clean, most especially the face. Investing in a gentle facial cleanser and toner would not be a bad idea. If you wear makeup, make sure to wash it off completely before bed. Also, if you can help it - keep your hands off your face! Your hands come in contact with all sorts of microbes from handling money, ATM machines, staircase handles and door knobs. Introducing such microbes to your already warm and sweaty face (which is ideal for microbial growth) could lead to inflammation and the emergency of those rashes and acne we spoke about earlier.

2. Sunscreen

Tying neatly into the first point is this. Use a sunscreen to protect yourself from UV radiation which may lead to sun burns and skin discolouration. I went gardening a few days ago without a sunscreen or hat and now have a large patch of skin on my face that's darker than the rest of my face. Search for a mineral based sunscreen as they give fuller coverage and provide physical protection against UV rays. Search the ingredients list for "Zinc oxide" or "Titanium dioxide" in at least the first two lines. Worried about your makeup? Worry not, most foundations now have at least one of the two incorporated into them. You can also apply your makeup over a layer of sunscreen to be on the safe side. Just don't forget to touch up as the day progresses and you begin to sweat.

3. Use less oil

I'm not talking about your diet, I mean on your skin. Now is the time to ditch the super conditioning body butter you made or purchased to protect your skin during the harmattan. Replace with a lighter lotion or butter (mango or avocado butters are great) which won't clog your pores or impede your skin from releasing heat as it regulates your body temperature. The heavier body butter (usually shea butter based) will make you feel hotter and sweat more during the day. Body powders can also be a boon as they can absorb excess oil and sweat, giving you a cool, sleeker feeling especially under the arms and between the thighs.

4. Get regular facials

I am not saying you have to go to a spa daily but weekly R & R's even from the comfort of your home could be just what the doctor ordered, and I have a simple schedule for you to follow. If you can do this every Saturday (or whatever day works for you):
Exfoliate your face using a gentle facial scrub or exfoliating glove., Follow up with a clay based face mask to clear those pores of oil, dirt and toxins. Wash off and pat dry. Apply your facial moisturizer as per usual. I wouldn't suggest facial oils unless you have the skin for it otherwise it could lead to breakouts. Less is more this season so stick to one or two products and save the extras for the more gruesome months.

Do you have any tips or tricks that work for you? I would love to hear them.

Love,
Jasmine



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