

Meet Irma Gottshalk

IGott Flava Catering

August 2023



Alright - so today we've got the honor of introducing you to Irma Gottshalk. We think you'll enjoy our conversation, we've shared it below.

1. Hi Irma, thanks for joining us today. So, naming is such a challenge. How did you come up with the name of your brand?

The name of the cookbook, Bless Up! Respect and Manners. Is first a Jamaican greeting. Around 2017, My brother who got left behind in Jamaica, called me, and greeted me with me "Bless up, Respect and Manners, and ray, ray, ray." I was preoccupied with cooking at the restaurant, and I did not understand what this dude was talking about. I went home and told my husband what he said, and that I thought he was telling me to give him respect. My brother should respect me because I'm the oldest. My husband began to laugh at me, and I asked him "Why are you laughing?" He said, "He is giving you respect, that's what that means." I declared in my Jamaican dialect, "OK, him betta". Growing up Jamaican, and to know Jamaicans, you must show respect, and you must have manners. It's a big disrespect if you walk past an elder, and don't greet them. I have felt that wrath on many



occasions. As for me, "Bless up" has a Godly connotation. Second, as I process my ancestors' journey through the Transatlantic slave trade or genocide, and into the Caribbean. My whole being gives honor to God our Creator and to my ancestors, and elders. So, Bless Up! Respect and Manners is always in order. Third, the food of my enslaved ancestors has built and made many nations wealthy, and continues to sustain those nations, from sugarcane, banana, and coffee to chocolate, just to name a few. My enslaved ancestors ate this food and have built many nations with the food. The world needs to be reminded of this fact, and the least that is due is respect and manners. I am going to shout this from the mountain tops all over the world.

2. Great, appreciate you sharing that with us. Before we ask you to share more of your insights, can you take a moment to introduce yourself and how you got to where you are today to our readers.

I migrated from Jamaica to Houston, Texas. I retired from the Army with 22 years of service; with one tour in Desert Storm /Shield and Iraqi Freedom. I attended Le Cordon Bleu Culinary School in Austin and graduated summa cum laude. I seek God about my next step. I opened the first Jamaican restaurant in Temple, TX. When I was transitioning to a catering company, the customers requested my recipes. I finally came to terms with sharing my recipes in the cookbook, "Bless Up, Respect and Manner, Cook and Eat Jamaican Food Weekly". This gives families an opportunity to put nutritional dense, delicious, and irie food on their dinner table.

3. We'd love to hear a story of resilience from your journey.

While I was operating the restaurant, our 9-year-old daughter Xoana was having difficulties in school and with her health. We made the decision to close the restaurant and go home and give the much-needed attention. The following year Xoana died of cancer. As soon as she passed, I was so happy I had made the decision to close the restaurant. It was a difficult decision to make, but God is all knowing and all seeing. During my grieving stage, when guilt tries to overtake me, I must remind myself. Thank God I close the restaurant for her. The cookbook is dedicated to Xoana Gottshalk.

4. Can you talk to us about how your funded your business?

How I funded my business was a blessing. A restaurant is one of the most expensive businesses to start. The previous restaurant owner of that location wanted to vacate his lease, and to do so he would leave all the equipment that included the ventilation and fire system, 3-part sink, hand wash sink, grease trap, stoves, table, chairs, and shelving at no cost to me. I borrowed \$40K from PeopleFund, who did a training program for Veterans with a guarantee of a low interest rate. I used the money for renovations and cash flow. I also used the money from my savings.

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