



## The Black Farmer Ploughs his Own Furrow

There's a new phenomenon growing rapidly, deep in the countryside of the west of England at the headquarters of The Black Farmer.

When Jamaican-born, Birmingham-bred Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones bought his 30-acre Kitchen Farm near Launceston in Devon 10 years ago, he became part of the miniscule 1.4% ethnic minority in England's rural population. Far from being deterred by being referred to by his neighbouring white farmers as "The Black Farmer," Jones has turned the name into a highly successful brand for his own range of meats and sauces, which won him the "Entrepreneur of the Year Award" at last year's Black Enterprise Awards. You'll find Black Farmer products on the shelves of most supermarket chains in England; there's a Black Farmer scholarship scheme which encourages black and Asian inner-city youths "to get into an industry which has been denied them for so long" and if Jones' plans materialise, Air Jamaica passengers could soon be enjoying an inflight Black Farmer breakfast: sausages (Black Farmer of course), fried egg and plantain, with jerk chicken and spare ribs as options.

Don't doubt the man, still the right side of 50, who has international ambitions for his brand on the scale of Kellogg's, Heinz and Cadbury; who runs his own food and drink marketing company CommsPlus along with his cattle farm and produce company, and who's looking to become a Tory MP, "When I can find a seat."

Jones' rural and other successes are all the more remarkable coming from someone who grew up in the Birmingham's South Heath Estate, one of the poorest

areas in Europe; was a self-confessed "mouthy bastard"; who left school (where his headmaster thought he'd end up in prison) at 16, and was kicked out of the army. Looking back on this other life he remembers "a kid without direction or hope who didn't know what I was going to do with my life."

But there are clues to this amazing turnaround. Jones was born in Frankfield, Clarendon in 1957. His preacher father, and mother left him and his older sister in the care of an aunt, "Miss Edna," when they went to England looking for work. His country beginnings have never faded: "One of the things I always remember is the rural feel—pigs in the garden, mangoes. This rural background is part of our DNA." He sees both irony and a possible explanation for the alienation of black British youth in the fact that like his parents, "So many of the Jamaicans who came over in the 50s and 60s came from this background and went to the cities for work, becoming disconnected from the rural way of life."

The little country boy who came from Frankfield to Birmingham in 1961, found the transition: "Tough. First there was the weather; then after all the space in Clarendon, the concrete jungle." His father had swapped preaching for the car factory and his mother worked as a car assistant or part time in a factory. The family, which grew to nine kids, crammed into a terraced house, sleeping three to a bed. The only bright spot for Jones was his father's allotment, a small plot of land, which as the eldest boy was his responsibility. "There was a wonderful sense of space, I loved watching things grow." And despite the fact that "It was hell in winter, picking brussel sprouts with freezing fingers," it was in this urban garden his farming dream was nurtured; "I made a promise to buy myself a piece of English countryside."

After his undistinguished army career, came catering college, work as a chef and then the kind of career leap, which only comes with the right combination of talent and driving ambition. Inspired by the BBC social documentary series *Forty Minutes* Jones decided, "I wanted to work in TV. My family and friends thought I was mad, I had no experience." The BBC especially then was notoriously elitist,



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF WWW.BLACKFARMER.COM