

## History & Facts about Kwanzaa

Discover a perfect way to celebrate the African heritage with Kwanzaa! This famous holiday was founded in 1965 by graduate student Maulana Karenga. He believed that the African American people needed an annual holiday to celebrate their differences, so that they could grow strong as a whole, strengthen their collective self-concepts as a people, honor their past, critically evaluate their present, and commit themselves to a fuller, more productive future.

Kwanzaa literally means "first fruits of the harvest" in the African language Kiswahili. This holiday is a time when Africans and African Americans can get together to give thanks, and to enjoy the blessings of living and acting together as a family. The celebration starts on December 26th and continues through January 1st.

One of the important acts of Kwanzaa is to arrange all the Kwanzaa symbols on a table on the 19th of December. The steps are as follows:

Step #1 - Spread the Mkeka (A straw mat)

Step #2 - Place the kinara (candle stand) in the center of the Mkeka.

Step #3 - Place the muhindi (ears of corn) on either side of the Mkeka. One ear of corn for each child in the family.

Step #4 - Creatively place the zawadi (gifts), kikombe cha umoja (unity cup), tambiko (water and soil), and a basket of fruit on the mkeka.

Step #5 - Hang up bendera ya taifa (flag of the black nation). It should be facing the east.

Step #6 - Place mishumaa saba (Seven candles) in the kinara. Remember the mishumaa should be red, black and green. Use any creative match you desire.

Examples - three red, three green; one black; two red; two green; three black. The most common practice is to have One black candle in the center; three red candles to the left of the black candle; and the three red candles to the right of the black center candle. Afterwards it is suggested that you fast for one week to cleanse the body, discipline the mind and uplift the spirit.

On the first day of Kwanzaa all members of the family unite in Harambee (Let's pull together), it is a call for unity. Each member of the family raises up the right arm with an open hand and while pulling down, closes the hand into a fist. Harambee is done in sets of seven in honor and reinforcement of the Nguzo Saba (seven guiding principles), one for each day of kwanzaa. The Nguzo Zaba, seven principles are as follows:

Day 1 - Umoja: Unity

Day 2 - Kujichagulia: Self-Determination.

Day 3 - Ujima: Responsibility

Day 4 - Ujamaa: Cooperative economics.

Day 5 - Nia: Purpose.

Day 6 - Kuumba: Creativity

Day 7 - Imani: Faith.

One of the most vital parts of Kwanzaa is the lighting ceremony, which is normally performed by the youth. The youth light one candle on each day of Kwanzaa until all seven have been lit. After the ceremonial lighting, the principle of the day is discussed. The discussion is focused on each member's understanding one of the seven guiding principles and their commitment and responsibility to practice that principle for the better of self, family, and African American people.

Kwanzaa is a spiritual, festive and joyous celebration of the unity and goodness of life, which claims no ties to any religion. Kwanzaa is a way of life; not just a celebration. It is a week of remembering, reassessing, recommitting, rewarding and rejoicing.

For additional information, visit: [www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org](http://www.officialkwanzaawebsite.org)

## **Kwanzaa yenu iwe na heri! (HAPPY KWANZAA)!!!**

The Los Angeles Chapter of APTA would like to share the following African Recipes with you to add a little African flavor to your upcoming holiday festivities! Enjoy!

### **African Sweet Potato and Peanut Soup**

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

1 Tablespoon Vegetable Oil  
1 Large Chopped Onion  
2 Cloves Minced Garlic  
2 Tsp. Minced Fresh Ginger Root  
1 1/2 Tsp. Ground Cumin  
1 1/2 Tsp. Ground Coriander  
1/2 Tsp. Ground Cinnamon  
1 Pinch Ground Cloves  
3 Chopped Medium Tomatoes  
1 1/2 Lbs. Sweet Potatoes, Peeled and Chopped  
1 Carrot, peeled and chopped  
4 1/2 Cups Water  
1 Tsp. Salt  
1/4 Cup Chopped Unsalted dry-roasted peanuts  
1 Pinch Cayenne Pepper  
2 Tbsp. Creamy Peanut Butter  
1 Bunch Chopped Fresh Cilantro

Step #1 - Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium to high heat. Saute the onions for 10 minutes, or until lightly browned. Mix in garlic, ginger, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, and cloves. Stir in tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and carrot. Continue to cook and stir for approximately 5 minutes.

Step #2 - Pour water into the saucepan, and season the mixture with salt. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

Step #3 - Remove the soup mixture from heat. In a food processor or blender, blend the soup and peanuts until nearly smooth. Season with cayenne pepper. Return to the saucepan. Mix in the peanut butter with a whisk, and cook until heated through. Serve warm topped with fresh cilantro.

### **Pineapple Nut Bread (Liberia)**

Yield: 10-inch loaf

Some of the most excellent bakers are the women from Liberia. This pineapple nut bread is a favorite among them. Usually served with cream cheese.

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

1 Cup Bran  
1 Tablespoon Baking Powder  
1 Teaspoon Baking Soda  
1/2 Cup Chopped Roasted Peanuts (or Walnuts)  
2 Eggs  
3/4 Cup Crushed Drained Pineapple  
2 1/2 Cups All Purpose Flour

Step #1 - In a 4-quart bowl combine 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, the bran, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and chopped roasted peanuts or walnuts.

Step #2 - Beat eggs until light.

Step #3 - Add 3/4 cup drained crushed pineapple

Step #4 - Add wet ingredients to dry ingredients and stir thoroughly.

Step #5 - Bake at 350 degrees in greased loaf pan for 1 hr. Test with toothpick (when toothpick is dry, bread is done.)

### **Basque Chicken Yassa (Senegal)**

To eat it in the traditional way, put the chicken and the sauce over rice or cous cous in a large pot. Have you and your guests sit around it. Each person should dig into the part of the pot closest to them and take a mouthful of rice and chicken, using only his/her right hand. The left hand should never be put inside the pot. Sometimes you need to ask someone else for help to break a part of the chicken, that's part of the fun. The middle section of the pot is open to all.

#### **INGREDIENTS:**

- 5 lbs chicken pieces, skinned and washed
- 1 1/4 cup of lemon juice
- 1/2 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup peanut oil
- 3 onions
- sliced -2 sprigs of thyme
- red pepper, to taste
- 2 cups water
- 4 bay leaves

Mix the lemon juice, the vinegar, half the oil, the onions and pour onto the chicken pieces in a bowl. Marinate overnight, or longer. Remove the chicken and the onions from the marinade. Brown the chicken on both sides. Fry the onions in the remaining oil for several minutes. Add the marinade, thyme, hot pepper, water and bay leaves. Simmer on medium heat for about 10 minutes. Return the chicken to the sauce and cook until done, about half an hour