



KWANZAA!

WHAT IS IT AND HOW IS IT CELEBRATED?



Kwanzaa is here! A week of festivities from December 26th to January 1st, friends and family gather together to celebrate African American culture and heritage; to feast; exchange gifts; and express gratitude.

Created in 1966 by activist and educator Maulana Karenga, Kwanzaa was established as a way to encourage pride within the Black community and rebuild neighborhoods that were impacted by the civil rights riots (now referred to as the Watts Rebellion) that were occurring in Los Angeles the year before. Karenga's goal was also to empower Black Americans to rediscover and honor their African roots.

In Swahili, the most widely-spoken language in Africa, Kwanzaa means "First Fruits," referencing the joy and unity felt during the harvest season. A woven mat called a *Mkeka* (muh-KAY-kuh) is often placed on the table to represent the traditions that the holiday is based on. Baskets filled with fruits and vegetables are placed on the *mkeka* to represent the harvest, and an ear of corn per child is placed in the basket. A *Kikombe cha umoja* (kee-KOHM-bee cha oo-MOH-jah), commonly known as a Unity Cup, is also placed upon the mat.

The *Kinara* (kee-NAH-ruh), which holds seven candles - one black, three red, and three green - is lit each night, one candle at a time, to signify the seven guiding principles of Kwanzaa (see below). The black candle in the middle represents unity among people of African descent; the red candles on the left represent the past, and the green candles on the right stand for the future.

Though the festival lasts for seven days, the sixth day concludes with a big feast called *Karamu* (kuh-RAH-moo) on December 31st, where participants gather together to play music, dance, sing, and eat dishes traditional to the African American, African, Caribbean, and South American cultures. On January 1st, Kwanzaa culminates on a quieter note, with people reflecting on who they want to be in the future and how they plan to succeed in the New Year.

THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF KWANZAA



NGUZO SABA



UMOJA △ UNITY

TO STRIVE FOR AND MAINTAIN UNITY IN THE FAMILY, COMMUNITY, NATION, AND RACE.



KUJICHAGULIA △ SELF-DETERMINATION

TO DEFINE OURSELVES, NAME OURSELVES, CREATE FOR OURSELVES AND SPEAK FOR OURSELVES.



UJIMA △ COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY

TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER AND MAKE OUR BROTHER'S AND SISTER'S PROBLEMS OUR PROBLEMS AND TO SOLVE THEM TOGETHER



UJAMAA △ COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS

TO BUILD AND MAINTAIN OUR OWN STORES, SHOPS, AND OTHER BUSINESSES AND TO PROFIT FROM THEM TOGETHER



NIA △ PURPOSE

TO MAKE OUR COLLECTIVE VOCATION THE BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COMMUNITY TO RESTORE OUR PEOPLE TO THEIR TRADITIONAL GREATNESS



KUUMBA △ CREATIVITY

TO DO ALWAYS AS MUCH AS WE CAN IN THE WAY THAT WE CAN IN ORDER TO LEAVE OUR COMMUNITY MORE BEAUTIFUL AND PROSPEROUS THAN WE INHERITED



IMANI △ FAITH

TO BELIEVE WITH ALL OUR HEART IN OUR PEOPLE, OUR PARENTS, OUR TEACHERS, OUR LEADERS, AND THE RIGHTNESS AND VICTORY OF OUR STRUGGLE

SKILLET FRIED PLANTAINS RECIPE

- 2 very ripe plantains (nearly black)
- 1/2 cup of neutral oil (canola or vegetable)
- 1/4 tsp kosher salt
- 1 lime, juiced



Slice off the ends of the plantains, removing about 1/2 inch from each tip. Make a slit through the skin and peel it away from the fruit. Set aside the fruit and discard of the skin.

Pour the oil into a large sauté pan and heat on medium until the oil shimmers. While the oil heats, slice the plantain on a bias into 1/2 inch thick pieces and sprinkle with salt.

Prepare a plate by lining with paper towels. Taking caution not to overcrowd the pan, carefully place the plantains in the oil and cook until golden brown, flipping once. About 3 minutes per side. Plantains should be soft in the middle with crisp edges. Transfer to prepared plate.

Once all the plantains are cooked, transfer to a serving plate, season with additional salt, if you like, and sprinkle with fresh lime juice. Serve immediately!

Recipe Courtesy NY Times Cooking

