

# Celebrating Black History Through Food. Recipes of Resilience and Struggle



# Food and Black History

- A Historical Journey of Culture, Resilience, and Community
- Food is deeply woven into Black history, reflecting resilience, culture, survival, creativity, and community across generations. From African roots to modern cultural influence, the story of Black foodways is both a history of struggle and a celebration of identity.

# African Culinary Roots

- Roots in African staples like rice, okra, yams, and grains
  - Strong farming and communal traditions
  - Cultural foodways carried across generations



# African Culinary Roots

- Before the transatlantic slave trade, African societies had rich agricultural and culinary traditions. Staple foods included:
- Rice
- Yams
- Okra
- Black-eyed peas
- Millet and sorghum
- These foods were nutritious, communal, and often prepared in large gatherings. Cooking methods such as stewing, slow-cooking, and seasoning with herbs were foundational practices that would later shape African American cuisine.

# Food During Enslavement

- Limited rations but unlimited ingenuity
- Hearth cooking and shared survival meals
- Food as dignity and endurance



# Food During Enslavement

- During enslavement, Africans were forced into harsh conditions where food was scarce and often of low quality. Enslaved people were typically given scraps and rations such as:
- Cornmeal
- Salt pork
- Molasses
- Yet, they used their African knowledge to transform limited ingredients into nourishing meals. Dishes like rice with beans, stews, and greens became symbols of endurance and ingenuity.

# The Birth of Soul Food

- Collard greens, cornbread, black-eyed peas
- Fried chicken and slow-cooked stews
- Flavor rooted in resilience and heritage

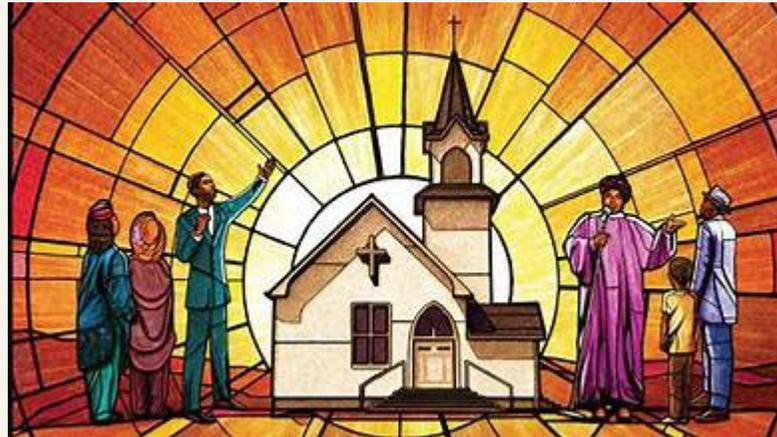


# The Birth of Soul Food

- On plantations, enslaved cooks created what would eventually become known as **soul food**. Using discarded cuts of meat and garden-grown vegetables, they developed flavorful dishes such as:
- Collard greens
- Cornbread
- Chitlins (chitterlings)
- Fried chicken
- Sweet potatoes
- These meals were not only sustenance but also expressions of culture and care within Black communities.

# Food and the Black Church

- Fellowship meals and repasts
- Sunday dinners as ministry
- Food as comfort, unity, and love

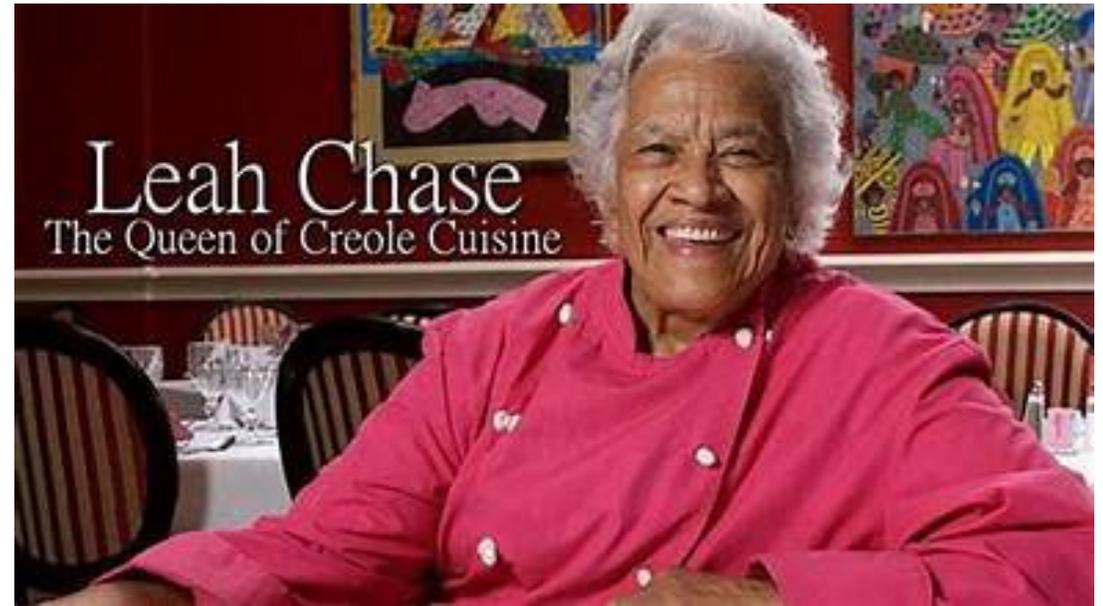
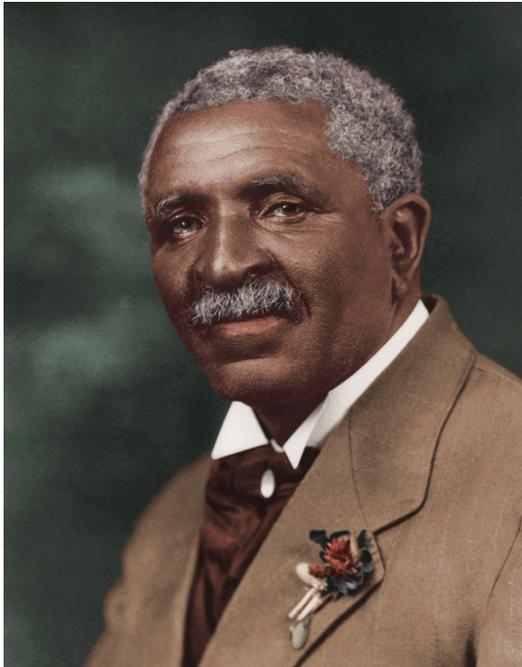


# Food and the Black Church

- Church kitchens, family reunions, and Sunday dinners became sacred spaces where:
- Recipes were preserved
- Traditions were taught
- Community bonds were strengthened
- Church kitchens and fellowship meals became spaces of unity, comfort, and ministry. Food played a role in worship, repasts, and community gatherings, just as they continue to do today.

# Black Culinary Innovators

Figures like George Washington Carver, Edna Lewis, and Leah Chase shaped American agriculture and cuisine while preserving heritage.



# Black Culinary Innovators

- Black innovators have profoundly shaped American food culture:
- **George Washington Carver** promoted the use of peanuts and sweet potatoes to support Black farmers.
- **Edna Lewis** preserved Southern and African American culinary traditions.
- **Leah Chase** used her restaurant as a civil rights meeting place while celebrating Creole cuisine.
- Their work elevated Black food from survival cooking to culinary excellence.



# Survival and Resistance

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**BLACK RESISTANCE**

# Food as Survival and Resistance

- Cooking became a form of survival, dignity, and cultural preservation. Recipes and traditions were passed down through generations.
- Food has historically served as a means of survival during slavery and oppression.
- Culinary traditions reflect cultural heritage and resilience against erasure.
- Community gatherings around food foster solidarity and collective identity.
- Celebrating and preserving traditional recipes honors ancestral knowledge and history

# Great Migration & Family Tables

- Southern traditions carried North
- Family reunions and shared meals
- Food preserving identity and legacy



# Emancipation and the Great Migration

- After emancipation and during the Great Migration, millions of Black families moved from the South to northern cities like New York, Chicago, and nearby Connecticut communities. Food traveled with them.

# Celebrations & Cultural Heritage

- Juneteenth foods and red symbolism
- Cultural celebrations through meals
- Food as a symbol of freedom and joy



# Food in Celebrations and Culture

- Food holds spiritual and cultural meaning in Black history. From Juneteenth celebrations with red foods symbolizing resilience, to church gatherings after worship, meals represent:
- Fellowship
- Heritage
- Gratitude
- Remembrance
- This is especially significant in church life, where shared meals often accompany worship, funerals, and community programs—serving both the body and the spirit.

# Community, Culture, and Gathering

- Shared meals build unity and strength
- Food as cultural storytelling
- Community tables across generations



*Community*  
**MEAL**



# Modern Influence and Cultural Legacy

- Today, African American cuisine continues to influence global food culture through:
- Southern cuisine
- BBQ traditions
- Fusion cooking
- Farm-to-table revival of traditional Black crops
- Black chefs, historians, and cultural leaders are reclaiming food history, emphasizing health, heritage, and cultural pride.

# Scripture Connection: Fellowship & Food

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts." – Acts 2:46

In Black history and the church, food has always represented fellowship, gratitude, and spiritual unity.



# Scripture Connection: Fellowship & Food

- The scriptural connection to food in Black history is beautifully reflected in Acts 2:46, which reminds us that the early believers “broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”
- **In much the same way, food has long been a sacred expression of fellowship, survival, and faith within the Black experience. From shared meals during times of hardship to church repasts, family gatherings, and community celebrations, breaking bread has symbolized unity, gratitude, and God’s sustaining grace.**
- Even in the face of struggle, meals prepared and shared became acts of love, resilience, and spiritual connection—nourishing not only the body but also the soul.
- **Thus, the table has served as both a place of cultural preservation and a living testimony that, through faith and community, God provides strength, comfort, and togetherness across generations.**

# Celebrating Black History Through Food: More Than A Meal



# Conclusion: More Than a Meal

- Food in Black history represents faith, survival, community, and cultural legacy—telling a powerful story of strength passed down one meal at a time.
- Celebrating Black History through food honors the journey of a people who turned struggle into strength, scarcity into creativity, and meals into memories. Food is not just nourishment—it is history on a plate, culture in practice, and legacy passed from one generation to the next.