

Celebrate Kwanzaa!

The holiday of Kwanzaa is celebrated every winter from December 26 to January 1. Established in the 1960s, Kwanzaa is a celebration of African American culture, history, and heritage. It is based on year-end harvest festivals that have occurred throughout the African continent for thousands of years. In fact, the word "Kwanzaa" comes from the Swahili phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which translates to "first fruits of the harvest." The symbols of Kwanzaa include candles representing the seven principles of Kwanzaa, corn and other crops, and a black, red, and green flag. Public Kwanzaa celebrations often include traditional African music, dancing, food, clothing, arts, and crafts. People around the world celebrate Kwanzaa each year, including many Mississippians.

Nguzo Saba: The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa

Umoja: Unity

To maintain unity in your family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia: Self-Determination

To define, name, create, and speak for yourself in order to create a unique identity.

Ujima: Collective Work and Responsibility

To build and maintain your community and to solve the problems of others together.

Ujamaa: Cooperative Economics

To build and maintain your own business.

Nia: Purpose

To build and develop your community and restore your people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba: Creativity

To do as much as you can to leave your community more beautiful and beneficial than when you entered it.

Imani: Faith

To believe in your people, parents, teachers, and leaders.

Kwanzaa Benne Cakes

People around the world celebrate fall harvests with food, feasting, family, and friends. Kwanzaa is no different! One traditional Kwanzaa food is benne cakes which originated in West Africa and are eaten for good luck.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup toasted sesame seeds

Preheat the oven to 325°F. Lightly grease a cookie sheet. Mix together the brown sugar and butter, and beat until they are creamy. Stir in the egg, vanilla extract, and lemon juice. Add flour, baking powder, salt, and sesame seeds. Drop rounded teaspoons of dough onto the cookie sheet 2 inches apart. Bake for 15 minutes or until the edges are browned. Makes approximately three dozen.

Make a festive Kwanzaa placemat for your dinner table!

Materials:

- Black, red, and green construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue or stapler
- Lamination paper or contact paper

Directions:

1. Fold black construction paper in half lengthwise.
2. From the folded edge, cut an even number of strips one inch in width to within one inch of the opposite side.
3. Cut one-inch strips of red and green construction paper that are the length of the black construction paper.
4. Weave red and green strips over and under the black strips.
5. Glue or staple the strips in place.
6. Laminate the mat for use at the dinner table.