



Source: [Charlotte Country Day School](#), "Celebrating Kwanzaa" article published 12/9/21

This weeklong African-American celebration of family and community is a time to honor African ancestors and culture, and of course, a chance to get together to prepare and enjoy great food. Celebrations begin by lighting candles, giving gifts, and decorating homes in the African colors of red, green, and black. And by cooking. Throughout the week, favorite African-American dishes, as well as traditional African, Caribbean, and South American recipes, are on many menus. Kwanzaa starts December 26th and on January 1st, 2024, the holiday culminates in a feast called *Karamu*.

Today's Lunch Menu

Jerk Chicken

A traditional Kwanzaa dish, Jerk-Style Chicken is packed with flavor. Jerk is a style of cooking native to Jamaica and popular throughout the Caribbean, in which meat is dry-rubbed or wet marinated with a hot spice mixture called Jamaican jerk spice.

Black Eyed Peas & Jollof Rice

Jollof rice is one of the most common dishes in West Africa and can be traced to the Senegambian region that was ruled by the Jolof Empire in the 14th century. Black-eyed peas are one of the most frequently used beans in African, Latin American and African American cooking. It is a popular tradition to eat black-eyed peas during Kwanzaa and on New Year's Day for good luck throughout the year.

Bacon Braised Collard Greens

Collards are vegetables that have large green leaves and tough stems, which are removed before eating. The leafy parts that we eat are called "collard greens." Collard greens are one of the most popular dishes served during Kwanzaa.

Sweet Potato Pie with Whipped Cream

The name of this holiday originates from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, which translates to the "first fruits of the harvest." This pie celebrates the harvest of sweet potatoes. A sweet potato custard filling with warm spices gets baked on top of a pie crust.