

KWANZAA

MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022 –SUNDAY,
JANUARY 1, 2023

Kwanzaa is an annual family celebration held primarily in the United States. Kwanzaa celebrates the seven values in African culture: **unity, self-determination, collective responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.** It honors African heritage and African American culture. It is a week-long celebration culminating in a communal feast called Karamu.

HISTORY

Kwanzaa was established in the 1960s to help African Americans reconnect with their African cultural and historical heritage by uniting in meditation, reflection, self-examination, and study of African traditions. Initially celebrated by Black nationalists who wished to express their Pan-African solidarity, Kwanzaa was quickly embraced in the African American community because of its family strengthening virtues.

The name Kwanzaa is derived from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, meaning “first fruits of the harvest.” It is a compilation of several harvest festivals and celebrations that are held throughout the African continent. The celebration of Kwanzaa is guided by *Nguzu Saba*, or the “Seven Principles of African Heritage,” with each day of Kwanzaa being dedicated to a different principle.

CUSTOMS

Kwanzaa symbols include a decorative mat (Mkeka) on which other symbols are placed, corn (Muhindi) and other crops, a candle holder (Kinara) with seven candles (Mishumaa Saba), a communal cup for pouring libation (Kikimbe cha Umoja), gifts (Zawadi), and the fruits and vegetables of the harvest (Mazao). Families celebrating Kwanzaa decorate their households with objects of art, colorful African cloth such as kente (especially the wearing of kaftans by women), and fresh fruits that represent African idealism. A Kwanzaa celebration may include drumming and musical selections, libations, a reading of the African Pledge and the Principles of Blackness, reflection on the Pan-African colors, a discussion of the Kwanzaa principle of the day or a chapter in Kwanzaa history, a candle-lighting ceremony, artistic performance, and, finally, a feast (karamu). The greeting for each day of Kwanzaa is *Habari Gani?* which is Swahili for “What's the News?”



ACTIVATION SUGGESTIONS

1. Place a sign at the hostess stand that reads “Happy Kwanzaa.”
2. Display a Kinara or other Kwanzaa symbols and display the symbol of the day.
3. To educate your staff, outline the seven principles of Kwanza and highlight how important they are to the celebrations.
4. Celebrate fruits of the harvest with decorations around the restaurant.
5. Post the principle of the day and provide a brief explanation of the candle colors and arrangements.
6. If you have an associate that celebrates Kwanzaa, have them tell their stories.
7. For a customer or staff challenge, create a picture with hidden Kwanzaa symbols.
8. Provide a list of Kwanzaa symbols that are on display all around the room- children and family would try to locate them.
9. Identify influential African American leaders and share one per day with staff.
10. Teach staff the greeting of the day which is *Habari Gani* and have them greet guests as appropriate.



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