

A TASTE OF AFRICAN HERICAGE

10TH ANNIVERSARY REPORT



ABOUT THIS REPORT



Years before Juneteenth became a nationally recognized holiday or Netflix series explored African heritage cuisine, African Americans around the country began reclaiming their health using the wisdom of their ancestors through a ground-breaking six-week cooking and nutrition program called *A Taste of African Heritage*.

Never before had something quite like this been tried on a national model. The excitement was palpable and the results were aweinspiring. In the decade that followed, *A Taste of African Heritage* grew in a grassroots fashion, attracting interest from national SNAP-Ed Implementing agencies and local community groups alike.

In this report, we're looking back at a decade of history-making and health improvements. Thank you for being a part of our journey!



PROGRAM HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

"My soul—my inner self wept because [*A Taste of African Heritage*] celebrates healthy food traditions relevant to my culture. Foods that my Grandmother Sylvia and my Mother cooked, were linked back to healthy food traditions in the African Diaspora."

– Instructor in Washington, DC



Welcome to **A Taste of African Heritage**

A Taste of African Heritage is a six-week cooking and nutrition curriculum based on healthy foods from across the African diaspora. The core objective of A Taste of African Heritage is to help people eat and live more healthfully through a traditional diet.

African Americans are too often told that the foods they grew up eating are unhealthy and that poor health is a part of their heritage. *A Taste of African Heritage* flips the script by celebrating and reclaiming the often-unsung heritage of healthy eating for people of African descent.

A Taste of African Heritage is based on Oldways' popular African Heritage Diet Pyramid, a diet abundant in greens, fruits, vegetables, beans, whole grains, and other plant-based foods.

In each class, students learn about culinary history, traditional foods, and nutrition; they participate in cooking demonstrations and food tastings to expose them to new flavors and to help them prepare these foods easily and affordably at home.

Students also share in meaningful discussions about food, health, and culture. The six-week, group-learning model helps create a supportive social environment and positive weekly routine that connects and motivates students along their journey.

Recognizing that access to kitchen equipment is a barrier in underserved communities, each recipe in *A Taste of African Heritage* is designed to be made on a hot plate, no oven required. The recipes feature inexpensive, accessible ingredients (canned beans, sweet potatoes, etc.). Most importantly, the recipes are culturally accessible to the target audience, honoring the foods and foodways of people of African descent.

The heritage-based approach taken by Oldways is a strong motivator for change, with 98% of participants reporting that heritage is a motivator for healthy living.

Throughout this decade-long journey, *A Taste of African Heritage* has educated and positively impacted the diet and health of thousands of participants. It has cultivated an active network of trained nutrition leaders and mentors, local residents and professionals with strong ties to their communities striving for improved public health. And it has brought to light a culinary legacy and often-unsung cultural ownership of healthy eating for people of African descent.







The African Heritage Diet Pyramid





Meet the Experts Who Shaped the Program

Before creating the *A Taste of African Heritage* curriculum, Oldways assembled an advisory committee of nutrition scientists, culinary historians, and experts in African diasporic health and history to develop the African Heritage Diet Pyramid.

The committee, pictured here, includes culinary historians, nutrition scientists, and public health experts, each focused on African descendant health and history. Today, they continue to offer their expertise with Oldways' African Heritage & Health programs.



Constance Brown-Riggs, MSEd, RD, CDE, CDN



Angela Ginn-Meadow, RD, LDN, CDE



Allan J. Johnson, PhD



Robert Hall, PhD



Jessica B. Harris, PhD



Kristie Lancaster, PhD



Vivien Morris, MS, RD, MPH, LDN



Frederick Douglass Opie, PhD



Tambra Raye Stevenson



Toni Tipton-Martin



Katherine Tucker, PhD



Gail Pettiford Willett



Walter Willett, MD, DrPH



Akua Woolbright, PhD



Sara Baer-Sinnott



A Taste of African Heritage at a Glance

A Taste of African Heritage is designed for people of all ages and interests, including:

- Anyone who wants to add more flavor and nutrition to their life.
- Anyone interested in learning more about African heritage and culinary history.
- Friends wanting to get healthy or to start a cooking club together.
- Teens and preteens just learning how to cook.
- Seniors craving the foods of their childhoods and a taste of the old ways.

Oldways' teacher training program is free and self-paced online, meaning that anyone can become an *A Taste of African Heritage* instructor.

A Taste of African Heritage is taught locally by dietitians, chefs, church leaders, community health leaders, parents, librarians, and anyone passionate about bringing good food and good health to their community.

Lesson Overview

Lesson 1: Herbs and Spices
Lesson 2: Leafy Greens
Lesson 3: Whole Grains
Lesson 4: Beans and Rice
Lesson 5: Tubers and Mashes
Lesson 6: Fruits, Vegetables, and Healthy Lifestyle

Class Schedule 1 class per week, for 6 weeks

Class Duration 1 hour 45 minutes – 2 hours each

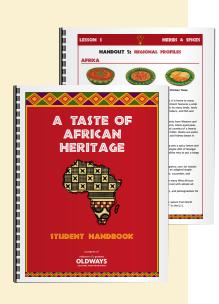
Recipes per Class 2-3

Class Components

Each class is divided up into 1) an intro, 2) an historical and nutritional discussion, 3) a cooking lesson, and 4) a time to eat together and reflect

Tracking Success

Confidential lifestyle and physical health evaluations





Designed with Food Accessibility in Mind

All *A Taste of African Heritage* recipes can be made on a hot plate or with basic cooking equipment—no oven or high-tech demo kitchen required.

Recipes feature affordable and accessible ingredients like canned beans, cabbage, and sweet potatoes. The program is entirely plant-based, and the lack of animal products or expensive meatsubstitutes also keeps costs down.

Studies show that it can take numerous exposures to a healthy food before people accept it. For this reason, people with limited food budgets tend to purchase foods they know their family will eat, which may not always be the healthiest. By being exposed to healthy foods and flavors week after week, *A Taste of African Heritage* participants can acquire or re-acquaint their taste buds with these ingredients in a risk-free environment without the worry of purchasing food for a recipe that they may or may not like.

Increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables isn't going to improve health if people are uninspired to cook with them or are unsure how to prepare them. *A Taste of African Heritage* teaches basic cooking skills and nutrition principles that people can carry with them throughout the rest of their lives, no matter what set of circumstances they find themselves in.

Perhaps most importantly, the recipes in *A Taste of African Heritage* are culturally accessible, honoring the foods and foodways of people of African descent.



One Size Doesn't Fit All

A Taste of African Heritage spotlights the four major regions that influenced African Diasporan cuisine in the United States:

- Continental Africa (especially West and Central Africa)
- The Caribbean
- The American South
- South America (especially Brazil)



Uplifting **Plant-Based** Traditions

Many of the students tend to ask, 'Where is the meat?'

My response: 'We don't have to teach you how to eat meat, you already know how to do that.' Once we get past that, most students are surprised how flavorful the food is, the historical history of diaspora health, and how quickly they can prepare meals. It is always an enjoyable event to share time, knowledge, and food with people—and to know it is making a healthy difference!

-Instructor in South Carolina

8%

of Black Americans are vegetarian, versus 3% of the general population¹



All of the recipes in A Taste of African Heritage are completely plant-based

31%

of non-white Americans have reduced their meat consumption in the past year, versus 19% of white Americans²

Graduates of *A Taste of African Heritage* overwhelmingly report that **heritage is a strong motivator for health**.

1. The New Food Fights: U.S Public Divides Over Food Science. Pew Research Center website. December 1, 2016. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2016/12/01/the-new-food-fights/

2. Mccarthy J., Dekoster S. Nearly One in four in U.S. Have Cut Back on Eating Meat.Gallup website. January 27, 2020. Accessed October 13, 2020. https://news.gallup.com/poll/282779/nearly-one-four-cut-back-eating-meat.aspx





THE A TASTE OF AFRICAN HERITAGE JOURNEY

"I am a huge fan of Oldways and *A Taste of African Heritage...* We were early adopters of ATOAH back in 2014. There are so many reasons I love the curriculum the approachable recipes, the diasporic connections to heritage foods, the delicious meals—but what I really love and why I want to bring this to Abington is that these classes build a community."

- Instructor in PA



A Taste of African Heritage Timeline: A Look Back at the **Past Ten Years**

milestones, success, struggles, etc.

2012

2013

2013-

2015

With support from the Walmart Foundation, A Taste of African Heritage is first piloted at 15 sites across the country reaching more than 100 individuals at health clinics, churches, and even beauty parlors.

A Taste of African Heritage "Teacher's Lounge" is created and launched. This online

interactive forum is designed to connect instructors to share questions, advice,

A Taste of African Heritage grows in a grassroots fashion, impacting hundreds of participants in dozens of states. Participants report improvements in healthy

eating behaviors, weight, waist circumference, and blood pressure.





2015 Oldways hosts their first in-person training event in Philadelphia, laying the foundation for the many organizational partnerships yet-to-come in cities around

Pennsylvania. 2015

Oldways also collaborates with the National Black Child Development Institute to create the Good For Me! Recipes family cookbook, which celebrates health, heritage, learning, and fun.

the country. A Taste of African Heritage is also first approved for SNAP-Ed use in



Oldways collaborates with the NHP Foundation, an affordable housing nonprofit, to host a series of classes across the country.

Oldways also creates an African Heritage and Health Ambassador program to strengthen the program's volunteer effort and community outreach.

A Children's Taste of African Heritage, which adapts A Taste of African Heritage for youth ages 8–12, is first piloted and launched.

A Taste of African Heritage is added to the USDA SNAP-Ed library, giving SNAP-Ed providers the opportunity to bring more culturally relevant nutrition programming to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

A Taste of Latin American Heritage, a spin-off of *A Taste of African Heritage* for the Latin American community, is first piloted and launched.

2019

2018

At the conclusion of the Walmart Foundation's grant funding, Oldways transitions the programming to a licensing model to begin building long-term financial sustainability for the program.

2020

A Taste of African Heritage classes go virtual in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, giving participants an opportunity to stay digitally connected while being socially distant.











Oldways launches a self-paced *A Taste of African Heritage* e-course, so that participants can attend *A Taste of African Heritage* classes from the comfort of their own home, learning from a dozen different longtime *A Taste of African Heritage* instructors and ambassadors.



2022

A peer-reviewed study published in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* concludes that participants of *A Taste of African Heritage* experienced improvements in weight, systolic blood pressure, and waist size, as well as higher intake of fruit, vegetables, greens, and higher frequency of exercise. Based on the strength of the evidence base, *A Taste of African Heritage* is accepted into the prestigious USDA SNAP-Ed Toolkit.





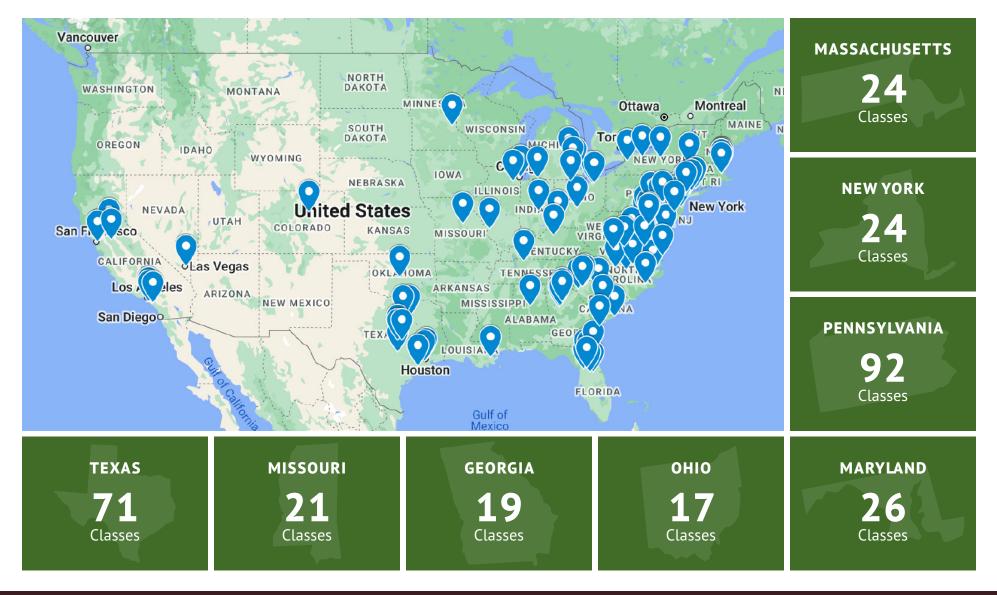






Where is A Taste of African Heritage Making a Difference?

A Taste of African Heritage has been taught in **more than 100 cities** since its beginning in 2012. Here are some of the communities where the class has been taught:







Thank you to our **Pilot Instructors**

Our pilot instructors helped test and launch *A Taste of African Heritage* a decade ago.

- Alfred Davis
- Andre Goode
- Angie Crawford
- Betty Johnson
- Cassandra Clay
- Jennifer Guzman
- Judy Belue
- Kalae Whitman
- Kameelah Mu`Min Rashad

- Karen H. Ward
- Kathe Hambrick-Jackson
- Lola Rooney
- Lynette Glover
- Neil Brantley
- Stephanye Clarke
- Tambra Stevenson
- Tracey-Ann Spence
- Vivien Morris

We'd also like to extend special appreciation to The Walmart Foundation, Sarah (Dwyer) McMackin, Constance Brown-Riggs, and Jessica B. Harris for their roles in developing, piloting, and championing *A Taste of African Heritage* from its inception.

We extend many thanks to all of the African Heritage & Health program managers:

- Sade Anderson
- Johnisha Levi
- Paola Garza

- Ruth Mendoza
- Kamisha Charles
- Sarah Anderson

Thank you to the **Oldways Board Members**

- Nicki Briggs, MS, RDN VP, Corporate Communications at Perfect Day
- Shakir Cannon-Moye Associate Director at Jobs for the Future
- Jesse Ziff Cool Owner and Founder, Cooleatz
- George Gendron Cofounder/Managing Director, The Solo Project
- Dan Kish Founder, Food-Fixe
- Phil Meldrum CEO, Foodmatch
- Ted Nelson CEO/Strategy Director, Mechanica
- Ana Sortun

Executive Chef And Co-Owner, Oleana Restaurant, Sofra Bakery & Cafe, and Sarma Restaurant

Cathy Strange

Vice President, Specialty and Product Innovation and Development, Whole Foods Market

• Sara Baer-Sinnott President, Oldways



Meet the A Taste of African Heritage Instructors and Ambassadors Changing Lives





Madea Allen (Washington, DC)



Shirelle Boyd (Cleveland, OH)



Deitra Dennis, RN, CHC (Macon, GA)



Brenda Atchison (Boston, MA)



Carrye Brown (Washington, DC)



Glorya Ferndandez (Boston, MA)



Anthony Beard, RD (Cleveland, OH)



Toni Colley-Perry (Sacramento, CA)



Dejenaba Gordon, MPH (Lindenwold, NJ)



Danessa Bolling (Houston, TX)



Tiffany Davis (Powdersville, SC)



Adante Hart, MPH, RD (Durham, NC)



Agiylah Collins, CHC (Henrico, VA)

"My first experience as A Taste of African Heritage instructor was fire! ... By connecting the dots between preparing traditional ancestral foods, cooking and improved health, partnering with the Oldways Heritage & Health Ambassador Program becomes an extension of my grandmother's legacy! I'm honored to be at this juncture."





Meet the *A Taste of African Heritage* Instructors and Ambassadors **Changing Lives**





Benita Law-Diao (Albany, NY)



Fatou Ndao (Harrisburg, PA)



Lashell Staples (Bowie, MD)



Angela Ledyard (San Diego, CA)



Claire Richardson (Philadelphia, PA)



Gail Thorpe (Plainfield, NJ)



Yvonne Lively (Detroit, MI)



Sytira Richardson (Chicago, IL)



Calvis Williamson (Ocala, FL)



Elyce Lloyd (Lorton, VA)



Nneka Shoulds (Baltimore, MD)

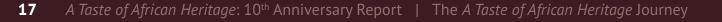


Lorri Wilson (Stamford, CT)



Selas Kidane (St Louis, MO)

"The African Heritage & Health program is part of my history and my passion. I enjoy teaching [A Taste of African Heritage] to help people in my community eat healthy and learn about African cultures."



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PROGRAM IMPACT

"This program has tremendously changed the way I prepare and therefore eat my food. I thought I was conscientious already in my food preparation and consumption, but found out not nearly enough. This class has proven to be one of the best things that I could have ever done for myself. Why? Because I eat every day and if I can make daily adjustments (no matter how small) it becomes a lifestyle of change not only to myself but to my family and friends as well. I'm spreading it like good news!"

- Participant in Dallas, Texas

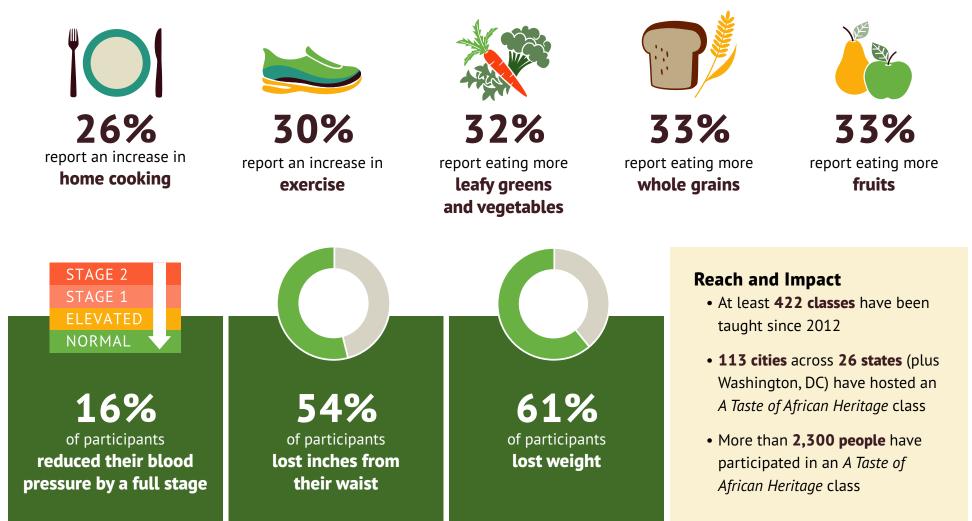




A Taste of African Heritage Impact By the Numbers

Across the full group, there are **statistically significant improvements** in weight, waist circumference, systolic blood pressure, cooking frequency, exercise, and consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, greens, herbs and spices, and vegetarian meals.

Based on pre- and post-survey data collected from A Taste of African Heritage participants:





Evidence-Based Results

A peer-reviewed study published in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* in 2022 shows that participants of *A Taste of African Heritage* significantly:¹





decreased weight, waist circumference, and blood pressure

98% reported heritage as a motivator for eating and living well

These findings build on the growing body of research that shows that culturallysensitive modifications to nutrition programs can lead to improvements in blood pressure, weight, and other health parameters.^{2,3,4}



1. Reicks M, Gold A, Tran N, LeBlanc K. Impacts of A Taste of African Heritage: A Culinary Heritage Cooking Course. J Nutr Educ Behav. 2022;54(5):388-396. doi:10.1016/j.jneb.2021.11.008

- 2. Sterling SR, Bowen SA. The Potential for Plant-Based Diets to Promote Health Among Blacks Living in the United States. Nutrients. 2019;11(12):2915. Published 2019 Dec 2.
- 3. O'Keefe SJ, Li JV, Lahti L, et al. Fat, fibre and cancer risk in African Americans and rural Africans. Nat Commun. 2015;6:6342. Published 2015 Apr 28. doi:10.1038/ncomms7342 doi:10.3390/nu11122915
- 4. Ard JD, Rosati R, Oddone EZ. Culturally-sensitive weight loss program produces significant reduction in weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol in eight weeks. J Natl Med Assoc. 2000;92(11):515-523.



What Partners and Instructors are Saying

"I am writing to thank you for your amazing curriculum - *A Taste of African Heritage*. Our staff team has so appreciated the thoughtful, strengths-based approach that celebrates culture and foods."

- Instructor in MN

"The discussions have been just as vibrant as the dishes that we're making in class! I can surely say that this class is making my students more informed about foods and is helping them make healthier choices when it comes to feeding themselves and their families."

- Instructor in MD

"To those of you on the fence, who are considering bringing *A Taste of African Heritage* to your community... all I can say is DO IT! You will be helping yourself and others in the true African spirit of Ubuntu: "I am who I am because of who we are to each other."

- Instructor in IL



"This cooking series has had a positive impact on the community, because many class participants create lasting friendships by learning and cooking together for six weeks, which is great to see. Many participants have expressed their love for the recipes created in class and how their families really enjoyed them when made at home, as well. We look forward to what Oldways has in store for us in the future!"

– Instructor in PA

"The class has learned a lot, they thought the dishes were delicious, and we've had fun on top of it ... I'm already getting requests to facilitate it again!"

– Instructor in MI



What Participants are Saying

"I would tell a newcomer to bring a notebook pen and pencil and take notes. It is so much to learn about different fruits, vegetables, and grains and your overall health will improve. I learned a lot of different fruits that I thought were vegetables and I learned to explore the produce area of the supermarket."

– Participant in Philadelphia, PA

"Greens are now my building-block starting at the store...This class has rekindled my memories of Africa and now I realize what African cooks were taught resulting in their healthy diet and lifestyle."

– Participant in Dallas, TX

"I was and am so excited about this class. I would probably let people know that we learn history and cooked different recipes. I am always wanting to try new foods. However, my downfall is 'what if I don't like it? Then I wasted money.' So I can easily say the recipes, the class and the foods [surprised me]."

– Participant in Temple, TX

"I've always been interested in healthy eating, I just didn't know how to start and this class jump start my new life. Now I eat more greens and fruits every day!

– Participant in East Orange, NJ

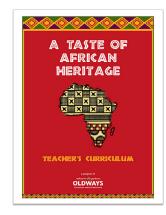
"This class has changed the way I eat and cook now. My diet and health has improved. Thank you. Keep the classes going because they are hands on and informative. We need good health information. Thank you all!"

– Participant in Philadelphia, PA





Host a Class Series



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A 6-week cooking and nutrition curriculum based on healthy plant- based foods from the African Diaspora. (Included in SNAP-Ed Library)

*Ask about purchasing supplemental instructional and recipe videos

A Children's Taste of African Heritage

A 7-week cooking and nutrition curriculum based on healthy plant-based foods from the African Diaspora.

Target Age: 8-12



A Taste of Latin American Heritage

A bilingual 6-week cooking and nutrition curriculum based on healthy plant-based foods from across Latin America.

Bring these programs to your community

Purchase the teachers manual (\$29.99 for English curricula, \$34.99 for bilingual curricula) and a bundle of 15 student handbooks (\$199.99 for English curricula and \$249.99 for bilingual curricula) in our webstore: <u>OldwaysWebStore.org/curriculum</u>

OR

Ask us about licensing a digital copy of the curriculum (starting at \$300/yr).

Learn More: classes@OldwaysPT.org | OldwaysPT.org / teach



JOIN THE MOVEMENT!



Take a Class

CLASS DIRECTORY

Visit <u>OldwaysPT.org/ClassDirectory</u> to see if there is a live class series available near you.

ONLINE CLASS

Take a self-paced online version of *A Taste of African Heritage* at:

oldways.thinkific.com/courses/ataste-of-african-heritage_



Acknowledgements

The success of *A Taste of African Heritage* is made possible with the help of a grant from the Walmart Foundation, and from our grassroots network of dietitians, health educators, chefs, students, schoolteachers, and non-health-related professionals who are dedicated to improving nutrition and health in their communities.

THANK YOU.

