



## AFRICAN HERITAGE: FOODS OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

The term, African Diaspora, is commonly used to describe the mass dispersion of peoples from Africa during the Transatlantic Slave Trades, from the 1500s to the 1800s. This Diaspora took millions of people from Western and Central Africa to different regions throughout the Americas and the Caribbean.

These African ancestors landed in regions that featured different local foods and cuisines, as well as other cultural influences that shaped their unique cooking styles. The overall pattern of a plant-based, colorful diet based on vegetables, fruits, tubers and grains, nuts, healthy oils and seafood (where available) was shared throughout these four regions, but their cultural distinctions have reason to be celebrated. Their tastes can be shared and tried by people everywhere.



The four healthy regional diets of African heritage are as follows:

### AFRICAN



Africa is home to leafy greens, root vegetables, mashed tubers and beans, and many different plant crops across its lands. In Central and Western Africa, traditional meals were often based on hearty vegetable soups and stews, full of spices and aromas, poured over boiled and mashed tubers or grains. In Eastern Africa, whole grains and vegetables are the main features of traditional meals, especially cabbage, kale and maize (cornmeal). In the Horn of Africa, where Ethiopia and Somalia are found, traditional meals are based on flat breads like *injera* (made of teff, sorghum or whole wheat) and beans blended with spices, like lentils, fava beans and chickpeas. Today, many meals in the Horn are still prepared in halal-style meaning that they include no pork, no alcohol, and meat only from animals who have died on their own. Across Africa, couscous, sorghum, millet and rice were enjoyed as the bases of meals, or as porridges and sides. Watermelon and okra are native to Africa, and many believe that cucumbers are too. Beans were eaten in abundance everywhere, especially black-eyed peas, which were often pounded into a powder for tasty bean pastes seared as fritters.

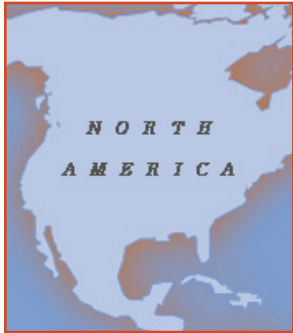


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## AFRICAN AMERICAN

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African American cuisine has been called “food to fall in love with.” Much of early African American cooking was influenced by both French and Spanish cuisines, and intertwined with Southern cooking to co-brand some of its major staples. The majority of traditional African American foods came straight from the garden. Cabbage, okra, tomatoes, peppers, and greens were abundant, including dandelion, mustard, collards, and turnip greens. Pickling vegetables was a popular way to preserve food; pickled beets, radish, cabbage, carrots, and cucumbers were enjoyed--and the list goes on! Louisiana’s Creole cooking has its roots in French, Spanish and Haitian cuisines, with a common base called “The Holy Trinity”: celery, onions and red bell peppers all equally chopped--which is at the heart of Louisiana’s popular Gumbo soup. Traditional Low Country cooking, from South Carolina and Georgia’s coast, features oysters, crabs, shrimp, sweet potatoes, Hoppin’ John, and rice.

## AFRO-CARIBBEAN

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The West Indies and Caribbean Islands bring tropical accents and seafood to the African diet. Approximately 23 million people of African descent live in the Caribbean. Here, we find French, African, and Spanish culinary influences. Surrounded by ocean, traditional African-Caribbean fare included a variety of seafood, like salt fish and conch; tropical fruits, like papaya and guava; rice and peas dishes, typically featuring pigeon peas or red beans. Coconut milk, breadfruit, callaloo, yams, plantains, annatto and pumpkins are all found in the Caribbean islands. In the southern parts of the Caribbean, *roti* is a popular flatbread, primarily made from whole wheat flour, that can be filled with curried vegetables and shrimp, or bean dishes, as a warm, soft roll-up.

## AFRO-SOUTH AMERICAN

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There are an estimated 100 million people of African descent living in South America, with a large majority in Brazil. The same African heritage staple-dishes are found here: soups and stews are very popular, as are rice and beans, and tubers like yuca and cassava. Okra, peanuts, squashes and plantains appear on many plates, as do fruits and fruit juices like mangoes and guava. A few favorite ingredients are red snapper, avocado, cilantro, and tapioca. Native American roots are seen in their corn/maize use, and their tamales that combine peas, carrots, potatoes, rice, and various spices as fillings. *Moqueca Baiana* is a popular traditional dish of Brazil. It is a seafood stew with prominent African roots made using palm oil, coconut milk, shrimp and crab, onions, garlic, peppers, tomatoes, and cilantro.





## Common Foods of the African Heritage Diet

The Traditional Foods of Africa, the Caribbean, South America, and the American South

Leafy Greens	beet greens, callaloo, chard, collard greens, dandelion greens, kale, mustard greens, spinach, turnip greens, watercress
Vegetables	asparagus, beets, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, eggplant, garlic, green beans, lettuce, long bean, okra, onions, peppers, pumpkin, radish, scallions, squashes, yambean (or jicama), zucchini
Fruits	avocados, baobab, bananas, blackberries, blueberries, cherries, dates, dewberry, figs, grapefruit, guava, horned melon, lemons, limes, mangos, oranges, papaya, peaches, pineapples, plums, pomegranates, oranges, tamarind, tomatoes, watermelon
Starches & Whole Grains	amaranth, barley, couscous, fonio, kamut, maize/corn, millet (pearl and finger), rice, sorghum, teff, wild rice
Tubers	breadfruit, cassava, plantains, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, yuca
beans	black-eyed peas, broad beans, butter beans, chickpeas, cowpeas, kidney beans, lentils, lima beans, pigeon peas
Nuts, Seeds	benne seeds, Brazil nuts, cashews, coconuts, dika nuts, groundnuts, peanuts, pecans, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds
Herbs, Spices & Homemade sauce Ingredients	apple cider vinegar, annatto, arrowroot, bay leaf, cinnamon, cilantro, cloves, coconut milk, coriander, dill, ginger, mustard, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, parsley, peppers, sage, sesame, (other) vinegar
Fish & Seafood	bream (or porgy), catfish, cod, crappie, crayfish, dried fish, mackerel, mussels, oysters, perch, prawns, mackerel, rainbow trout, sardines, shrimp, tuna
Poultry, Eggs, & Other Meats	chicken, turkey, eggs, lamb, beef
Oils	coconut oil, olive oil, palm oil, peanut oil, sesame oil, shea butter
Dairy (if tolerated)	buttermilk, yogurt (non-lactose sources: almond milk, rice milk, soy milk)
Sweets	cakes, custards, cobblers, pies made with fruits, nuts, and whole grains, and light on added sugars

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