



Food & Public History

Hearth Cooked Dinner by Chef Denzell Washington

Menu for June 26, 2021:

Smoked Ata Din Din BBQ Chicken with

Tomato-based BBQ Sauce

Farmers Market Salad

(Greens, Cucumbers, & Grilled Peaches

with Lemon-Dijon Vinaigrette)

Summer Succotash

(Corn, Lima Beans, Okra, Sweet Peppers,

Bacon)

Red Velvet Cake from Make My Cake

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Food & Public History Culinary History by Tonya Hopkins

June 26, 2021:

This week we're continuing with the Juneteenth theme highlighting America's newest federal holiday as we continue to usher in this "Summer of Freedom" ahead. Yet and still it is important to keep in mind the stark reality of what an under-resourced granting of freedom looked and felt like in that moment for so many:

"...Emancipation for the Negro was really freedom to hunger. It was freedom to the winds and rains of heaven. It was freedom without food to eat or land to cultivate, and therefore it was freedom and famine at the same time." —Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., May 8th 1967

Nonetheless, Juneteenth was a significant win for the Union and an accounting of the joyous responses of many Black Texans held in bondage upon hearing the news that slavery had ended and they were to be able to go forward as equal people in American society. For multitudes family was the foremost focus with the optimistic hopes and possibility (and for only some the actuality) of reuniting with loved ones that had been taken away or torn apart and sold afar (children, parents, siblings, etc.) as was custom over the course of centuries and decades. Which helps to explain why at the core of the holiday the emphasis is on family togetherness:

"Juneteenth is a time to gather as a family, reflect on the past and look to the future. Discover ways to celebrate this African American cultural tradition of music, food and freedom" — @NMAAHC website

This week we also introduce two dishes that exemplify the preponderance of red colored foods associated with the holiday: a tomato based barbecue sauce for the hearth smoked chicken and for dessert a hunk of red velvet cake. Why red foods (& drink) you ask?

The color has a historical and cultural continuity to societies throughout Western Africa (the origin of the majority of African Americans today) where red often played an important spiritual, ritual and even royal role for centuries. And as the color of our collective human life force, it also represents strong kinship ties to loved ones both in the present and the past. Lastly, as a dynamic color that signifies celebration the world over, red shows up in nature sparingly yet abundantly this time of year (e.g., strawberries, rhubarb, tomatoes, watermelon...). And as celebratory feasts were had in the years that followed, the season helped to support this culturally-rooted food tradition. For even further cultural dot connecting, Ata Din Din is a traditional Nigerian based sauce that Chef Denzell used today for added flavor depth in the tomato based bbq sauce.

We hope these hearty historically-rooted OSH Hearth Meals made for you to savor and enjoy this month have helped you to also reflect and give gratitude for the freedoms we have today. While also recognizing the importance of achievements of the past that are connected to continuing to secure, protect, and sustain freedom for all.



Tonya Hopkins “The Food Griot” -

Sharing Savory True Stories on the Makings of American Cuisine

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