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FOOD NETWORK CELEBRATES KWANZAA WITH NEW SERIES *THE KWANZAA MENU* HOSTED BY TONYA HOPKINS AND FEATURING DELICIOUS DISHES, SPECIAL GUESTS AND A LOOK AT THE HISTORY OF THIS ANNUAL SEVEN DAY HOLIDAY

Series Premieres on Monday, December 26th on FoodNetwork.com

NEW YORK – November 22, 2022 - **Tonya Hopkins**, aka “The Food Griot,” is a show host, legacy cook, drink designer, culinary history consultant and now host of new series, *The Kwanzaa Menu*, premiering Monday, December 26th on FoodNetwork.com. In the series Tonya invites some of her favorite people to celebrate Kwanzaa and its traditions through food and conversation. In each of the seven episodes Tonya and a special guest prepare a recipe that is connected to the day’s celebration. Together they will commemorate each day of Kwanzaa by cooking meaningful dishes and discussing the Nguzu Saba, the seven principles, and history of the holiday. When presented together, the collective dishes create a meaningful and celebratory Kwanzaa Menu.

Series guests include, entrepreneur and actor **Kareem Grimes** (*All American, For the Love of Jason*); **Kenya Parham**, cultural strategist, strategic communicator, facilitator, entrepreneur and thought leader, and Tonya’s sister; **Dr. Thomas A. Parham**, President of California State University, Dominguez Hills, author, scholar and Tonya’s father; actor, director, speaker, author, entrepreneur and food enthusiast **Taja V. Simpson** (*Tyler Perry’s The Oval*); **Blue Telusma**, columnist, social justice advocate, and spiritualist; and chef **Brittney “Stikxz” Williams** who creates dishes spotlighting the Caribbean diaspora.

“Celebrating Kwanzaa through good food and drink not only allows us to reconnect to the vibrance of our culinary history that greatly informs who we are as Black people, our very identities — but also to take pride in that which has so profoundly shaped American foodways at large, for centuries,” said Hopkins. “I intentionally chose fresh, naturally delicious, nutritious ingredients for each of the recipes to remind us of the culinary brilliance our ancestors brought to this New World and served up in ways that have long contributed to vitality and longevity.”

Viewers will be treated to a seat in the kitchen as each episode, aligned with one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa, features a special dish and conversation as Tonya and her guests cook up a very special Kwanzaa menu.

Episodes include:

“Umoja” (Unity) | *Amazing Hibiscus Mulled Wine Kwanzaa Mimosa*

Tonya is joined by her sister, **Kenya Parham**, and they prepare *Amazing Hibiscus Mulled Wine Kwanzaa Mimosa*, a recipe to celebrate the first day of Kwanzaa and the principle of Umoja (unity) which emphasizes the importance of unity in all areas, including family, community, nation and race. Traditionally libations, served in a Kikombe Cha Umoja (Unity Cup) are presented to acknowledge and honor the family units of present and past, and the center black candle of the Kinara is lit.

“Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)” | *Crispy Akara (Black-Eyed Pea Fritters) with Savory Smoky Sesame Sauce*

The principle of Kujichagulia focuses on building one’s identity as a person and a community and in honor of that, Tonya cooks up her *Crispy Akara (Black-Eyed Pea Fritters) with Savory Smoky Sesame Sauce* with the help of special guest, **Kareem Grimes**. The majority of Black Americans descended from (or passed through) the West African region and the recipe is a way to make culinary contact and acknowledge that point of origin and ancestral journey. On this day, the first red candle on the Kinara is lit.

“Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility)” | *Good Deeds Greens*

In this episode actress **Taja V. Simpson** joins Tonya to make *Good Deeds Greens*, a dish that embodies the principle of the day, Ujima. Ujima focuses on collective work and shared responsibility for both achievements and setbacks in the community and comes to life with this all-hands-on-deck recipe as they work together to clean and dice up the southern-style greens for this special dish. The first green candle on the Kinara is lit.



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“Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics)” | *Black Sable Rice Calas*

The principle of Ujamaa reinforces the third day's principle, Ujima, by encouraging support of each other economically and within the community. **Blue Telusma** helps Tonya in the kitchen to prepare *Black Sable Rice Calas* and discuss the origin of this dish created by Black women, as well as the history of Black Americans as the first food vendors and successful culinary entrepreneurs in America. The second red candle is lit on the Kinara.

“Nia (Purpose)” | *First Fruits Harvest Smoothie Bowl*

The principle of Nia means purpose and encourages us to move through life with intention, being mindful with our words and actions. In this episode, sisters Tonya and Kenya discuss restoration through healthy plant-based living while building this red, black and green *First Fruits Harvest Smoothie* bowl. On this day, the second green candle on the Kinara is lit.

“Kuumba (Creativity)” | *Yassa-Inspired Grilling*

The principle of Kuumba is a time to reflect on leaving the community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it; to celebrate creativity and ingenuity by paying homage to creative works (culinary, visual art, dance, music, literature) focusing on our rich history and vibrant future. Tonya is joined by **Chef Brittney “Stikxz” Williams**, and they set creativity ablaze, developing a new seasoning blend that incorporates Caribbean influences over open-fire grilling. On this day the third red candle on the Kinara is lit.

“Imani (Faith)” | *Cassava with Peanut Stew*

On the seventh and final day of Kwanzaa, the last green candle on the Kinara is lit for the principle of Imani. Imani acknowledges that at the root of all we do and who we are is spirit. On this day the focus is on spiritual faith, a faith in one's infinite possibilities, and a faith that persists through life's challenges and adversities. Tonya and her father, **Dr. Thomas Parham**, a distinguished pillar of the community, share space in their family kitchen and learn from one another while making a dish representative of Africans in the New World, *Cassava with Peanut Stew*.

Fans can join the conversation on social using #KwanzaaMenu and find recipes and more at FoodNetwork.com.

Tonya Hopkins, a.k.a “The Food Griot” is a Culinary History Consultant, Wine & Spirits Storyteller, Cocktail Cognoscenti and Provider of Nonfiction Food & Drink Narratives Across Many Mediums. She helped cofound the nonprofit James Hemings Society as an organization and platform to recognize and actively uphold the timeless Black culinary talents that so profoundly shaped the development of fine dining in the Americas. Tonya was the first and only food historian to be featured and appear in episodes of the long-running, daily show, *The Chew* and she served as the foremost food historian for the best-selling celebrity chef cookbook “Carla Hall's Soul Food: Everyday and Celebration.” In the beverage arena, Tonya teaches wine education classes at a Black-owned wine boutique in Brooklyn (Good Wine: A Food Lover's Wineshop) and creates historically informed, culturally-relevant cocktails for a range of clients, including drink design & wine curation for award-winning chefs seeking her help with what best pairs with their fare for the multi-course meals they're invited to make at the famed James Beard House.

Ms. Hopkins custom-researched and wrote the “African Origins of Beer” narrative prominently displayed onsite at Harlem Hops, the nation's first 100% African-American owned & operated craft beer bar & restaurant, in addition to designing its inaugural wine list and creating the flagship cocktails. Tonya serves as the lead Culinary History Advisor for the Old Stone House of Brooklyn's Food & Public History program where she launched a seasonal spirits sipping series to convey inclusive American history through the “liquid lenses” of pillar potations (e.g., rum, gin, brandy, American whiskey and bourbon). Tonya is an active Advisor on the Museum of Food & Drink's (MOFAD) “African/American: Making the Nation's Table” exhibition and she currently produces and hosts the weekly multi-media show “Savory & Sweet: Food History & Culture” on WURDRadio.com: which is one of just a few Black-owned and operated talk radio stations in the nation.

The Kwanzaa Menu is produced by Best Wishes Studio for Food Network.

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