



Kwanzaa: About the Holiday



Kwanzaa is an annual celebration of African American and Pan-African family, community, and culture. It was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga. Each of its seven days honors one of the Nguzo Saba, the Seven Principles.

Kwanzaa is celebrated every year from December 26 to January 1. The Karamu feast is held on December 31, the sixth day.

- Kwanzaa lasts seven days, from December 26 to January 1.
- Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Africana studies, created Kwanzaa in 1966.
- The name comes from the Swahili phrase *matunda ya kwanza*, meaning first fruits of the harvest.
- Kwanzaa is built around seven principles called the Nguzo Saba.
- The seven principles are Umoja, Kujichagulia, Ujima, Ujamaa, Nia, Kuumba, and Imani.
- Umoja means unity. It is the principle honored on the first day of Kwanzaa.
- A candleholder called the kinara holds seven candles called the *mishumaa saba*.
- The seven candles are three red, three green, and one black candle in the center.
- The mkeka is a straw mat that stands for history, culture, and tradition.
- Ears of corn, called *muhindi*, represent children and the future.
- The *kikombe cha umoja*, or unity cup, is shared during the celebration.
- A feast called the Karamu is held on December 31, the sixth day of Kwanzaa.