



## Hanukkah - December 7 - December 15

Hanukkah means “dedication” in Hebrew. Hanukkah is an eight day Jewish festival that reaffirms the ideals of Judaism and commemorates in particular the re-dedication of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the lighting of candles on each day of the festival. During the re-dedication of the Temple, there was only enough oil to burn the candles for one day. However, the candles burned for eight consecutive nights, giving the Jews time to find more oil. The eight days of Hanukkah commemorate this miracle. During each night of Hanukkah a candle is lit until all eight candles are lit. Prayers are typically said as the menorah is lit. After the menorah is lit, traditional Hanukkah songs are sung, followed by dancing, exchanging gifts, and eating lots of delicious food. The [traditional foods](#) for Hanukkah are fried because they celebrate the miracle of oil that kept the menorah lit. Traditional foods include latkes, jelly doughnuts and blintzes. Click [here](#) for latke recipes. [Local events](#) to celebrate Hanukkah.

### The benefits of holiday traditions

Traditions foster closeness between family members, provide family stability, and create feelings of belonging. Our values and beliefs are often reinforced through family traditions. Family traditions do not have to be elaborate, expensive activities.

It is also beneficial to share your cultural beliefs and celebrations with others. Sharing your traditions fosters respect and open-mindedness for other cultures. Celebrating our differences, as well as our common interests, helps unite and educate us. To understand other's perspectives, to broaden our own, and to fully experience and educate ourselves. In a word, heritage.



## Kwanzaa -December 26 - January 1

Each night of Kwanzaa a candle is lit to observe the nguzo saba, the seven principles of Kwanzaa. The principles of Kwanzaa are: Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamaa (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity) and Imani (faith). 3 red candles represent the struggle, 3 green candles represent the environment and a hopeful future. The black candle represents the people of African descent. Since Kwanzaa is a cultural holiday rather than a religious one, it can be celebrated alongside Christmas/ Hanukkah or on its own. The Kwanzaa Karamu feast always takes place on New Year's Eve. The Kwanzaa feast is a very special event that brings everyone closer to their African roots. It is traditionally held on December 31st and is a communal and cooperative effort. Decorate the place where the feast will be held in a red, green, and black scheme. A large Kwanzaa setting should dominate the room where the feast will be held. A large Mkeka should be placed in the center of the floor where the food is placed creatively and made accessible to all to serve themselves. Before and during the feast, an informative and entertaining program should be presented.

### Christmas Traditions around the world. [Click here to see how Christmas is celebrated in other countries.](#)



## Christmas Day - December 25

Gift giving is one of the most beloved traditions of Christmas (especially for children). It goes back to when the Three Wise Men offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to baby Jesus in the manger. Gifts are usually placed under the Christmas tree or within stockings in festive patterns. Decorated trees date back to Germany in the Middle Ages, with German and other European settlers popularizing Christmas trees in America by the early 19th century. A New York woodsman named Mark Carr is credited with opening the first U.S. Christmas tree lot in 1851. A 2019 survey by the American Christmas Tree Association, predicted that 77% of U.S. households displayed a Christmas tree in their home. Among the trees on display, an estimated 81% were artificial and 19 % were real.



Charlie Brown Christmas aired for the 1st time on Dec. 9, 1965 and almost half of all U.S. TV sets were tuned to the broadcast.



This date provides an opportunity for governments, organizations, and communities to come together to raise awareness, promote inclusion, and take action to improve the lives of persons with disabilities while also celebrating their achievements and contributions to society.

We celebrate this day to express solidarity in their struggle to overcome the barriers and challenges which they still face, due to stigmatization and exclusion. Learn more at <https://idpwd.org/>