

Cultural Celebrations: **February**

A Month to Learn and Celebrate!

February is a month filled with opportunities to learn about, reflect on, and celebrate diverse cultural and historical legacies. Across Canada and globally, this month holds deep significance for communities seeking to honor their histories, amplify their voices, and challenge systemic inequities. Whether through food, stories, art, or activism, February offers a space to celebrate resilience, advocate for justice, and foster connections.

What are the celebrations in February?

- **February 1-28th:** Black History Month
- **February 1-12th:** Chinese New Year & Lantern Festival
- **February 2nd:** Vasant Panchami
- **Feb 12th-13th:** Tu Bishvat
- **February 26th:** Maha Shivratri

Black History Month



What is Black History Month?

Black History Month is a dedicated time each year to recognize, celebrate, and reflect on the rich histories, cultures, and contributions of Black communities.

Observed every February, it serves as a reminder of the resilience, achievements, and vital role Black individuals and communities have played in shaping society, despite enduring centuries of systemic oppression and racism.

Black History Month in Canada

In Canada, Black History Month was officially recognized in 1995 following the advocacy of the Honourable Jean Augustine, the first Black woman elected to the House of Commons. It provides an opportunity to learn about the diverse experiences of Black Canadians, their enduring legacy, and the ongoing fight for equity and justice. It's a time to honor the past, celebrate cultural heritage, and engage in meaningful action to build a more inclusive future for all.

Special Feature *lyé*

An interview with Ariel Reyes Antuan,
Co-founder of *lyé* Creative



Reflecting on his roots, the significance of honoring Black history and heritage, and the powerful ways in which food, family, and community connect us across time & space.

 [Read full interview here](#)

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The Different Representations of Black Cultures in Canada

Canada's Black communities, particularly those from African and Caribbean, have long been shaped by the painful legacies of slavery and colonialism. Countries such as Jamaica, Haiti, Somalia, and Nigeria have some of the largest Black populations in Canada, with many of their ancestors arriving through the transatlantic slave trade or as refugees fleeing systemic oppression and violence. Black individuals from these nations often faced and continue to confront racism and discrimination upon their arrival in Canada, despite being drawn to the country for its promise of freedom and opportunity.

Black History Month offers a crucial opportunity to reflect on the harsh realities that shaped these journeys, from the legacy of slavery to the forced migration of African peoples to the colonial exploitation of Caribbean and African countries. It's a time to recognize the ongoing struggles for justice, equality, and representation faced by Black communities in Canada. Celebrating the contributions of Black Canadians during this month also reminds us that the path toward freedom and equality is a continued fight—one that calls for acknowledgment of past injustices and a commitment to dismantling systemic racism.



Diversity within Black cultures in Canada

In Canada, the Black population is diverse, with people tracing their roots to a variety of countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. The top 4 countries representing the Black population in Canada are:

Haiti



Haitian culture in Canada is rich in resilience, music, and community, with a strong presence in Montreal.

The Haitian diaspora has enriched Canada's culinary scene with dishes like griot (fried pork), diri ak djon djon (black mushroom rice), and pikliz (spicy slaw), preserving traditions while contributing to the country's diverse food culture.



[Recipe: Haitian Griot \(Fried Pork\)](#)

Jamaica



Jamaican culture in Canada is vibrant and influential, especially in Toronto, where the largest Jamaican diaspora thrives.

From reggae music and patois to community activism, Jamaican Canadians have left a lasting mark. Their cuisine, featuring jerk chicken, patties, and ackee and saltfish, has become a beloved part of Canada's diverse food scene.



[Recipe: Jamaican Jerk Chicken](#)

Nigeria



Nigerian culture in Canada is dynamic and growing, with a strong presence in cities like Toronto and Calgary.

Nigerian Canadians contribute to business, academia, and the arts while preserving traditions. Their cuisine, featuring jollof rice, suya (grilled meat), and egusi soup, has become a flavorful part of Canada's diverse food landscape.



[Recipe: Nigerian Jollof Rice](#)

Somalia



Somali culture in Canada is deeply rooted in community, entrepreneurship, with a strong presence in cities like Toronto & Edmonton.

Somali Canadians have enriched Canada with their poetry, music, and business ventures. Their cuisine, featuring bariis (spiced rice), canjeero (fermented flatbread), and suqaar (spiced meat), adds to Canada's diverse food scene.



[Recipe: Kac Kac \(Somali Donuts\)](#)

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Luna New Year January 29th-February 12th

Chinese New Year, or Lunar New Year, is 16 days long, beginning on the 29th January and culminating with the lantern festival on February 12th.



Luna New Year & Food

Various foods are eaten in celebration during the Lunar New Year period, many of them symbolizing wealth, longevity, good health and happiness for the new year. Some examples include: eating mandarins (because their gold colour symbolizes wealth), longevity noodles are served long and uncut to symbolize a long life, Nian Gao (Sticky rice cakes, either *or* savory, and Jiaozi (Dumplings) both representing wealth and prosperity in the upcoming year.



Vasant Panchami February 2nd

Vasant Panchami is celebrated in Hindu culture to celebrate the preparation for the arrival of spring. The day is associated with the Goddess Saraswati, who is the Goddess of Knowledge, associated with wisdom, art, music, and learning. It is believed that worshipping her on this day removes sluggishness and ignorance and prepares you for the season ahead.



Sarson Ka Saag

Vasant Panchami & Food

Many traditional dishes are enjoyed during this festival, including:

- **Besan Laddoo** - made from gram flour, ghee and sugar, these laddoos are a very simple and healthy sweet to make for the festive season. the rich golden colour and nutty aroma make them a favourite for celebrations
- **Malpua** - these deep fried pancakes, soaked in sugar syrup and often flavoured with fennel and cardamom are a delightful festive treat
- **Kesari Halwa** is an ancient traditional product during saraswati Puja, made using semolina or sooji, sugar, ghee saffron and dried fruits
- **Sarson Ka Saag** is a is a type of curry made with mustard greens and typically paired with roti.



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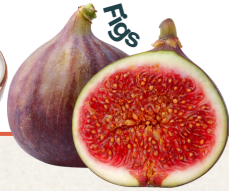
Tu Bishvat *February 12th-13th*

Tu Bishvat, known as the "New Year for Trees," is a Jewish holiday that celebrates nature and the environment. It falls on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Shevat and is traditionally marked by planting trees and enjoying fruits such as figs, dates, olives, and pomegranates.

Dates



Figs



In modern times, Tu Bishvat has also become a day to promote ecological awareness and sustainability.

Olives

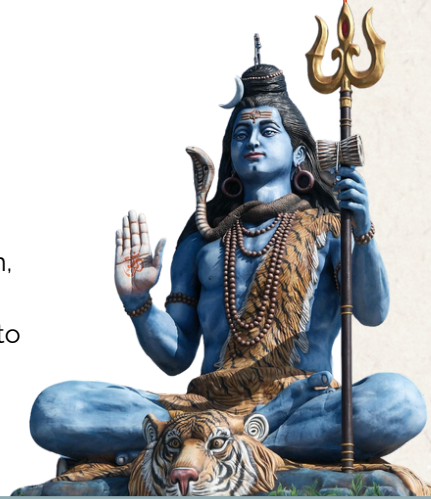


Pomegranate



Maha Shivratri *February 26th*

Maha Shivratri is a Hindu festival dedicated to Lord Shiva - the God of destruction, and also creation, celebrated annually on the 14th night of the lunar month of Phalguna (February–March). It is a night of devotion, fasting, and prayer, where devotees worship Shiva through rituals, chanting, and meditation. Many observe a strict fast and visit temples to offer milk, honey, and bel leaves to the Shiva Lingam. The festival symbolizes overcoming darkness and ignorance, seeking spiritual growth, and embracing divine consciousness.



Maha Shivratri & Food

During Maha Shivratri, many devotees observe a fast, consuming only sattvic (pure) foods or following a strict water or fruit diet. Traditional fasting foods include fruits, nuts, milk, yogurt, and dishes made from buckwheat, water chestnut flour, or tapioca pearls (sabudana). Popular dishes include sabudana khichdi, vrat ke aloo, and thandai, a spiced milk drink. While the festival emphasizes spiritual devotion, the special fasting foods provide nourishment and energy for prayers and night-long vigils.

Sabudana



Yoghurt



Nuts

