

Celebrating BlackHistoryMonth

Nourishing your body and soul

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During the month of February, we celebrate Black History Month, honoring the achievements and sacrifices of Black Americans. It's also a chance to honor and highlight "soul food," which has culinary roots and traditions stemming from continental Africa, the Caribbean, South America and the American South. Here are some healthy food options to celebrate Black History Month:

Choose plants Traditional African dishes focus on protein-rich legumes and green vegetables. Create dishes with staple favorites, such as squash, yams and sweet potatoes.

Spice it up Colorful spices like paprika, nutmeg, cinnamon and ginger have anti-inflammatory benefits and can help you maximize flavor. For a smoky essence, use smoked paprika or a sprinkle of smoked salt instead of ham or bacon.

Try fresh herbs Marinate proteins overnight in lemon juice and an herbal blend, such as rosemary and basil, and grill the next day for an extra layer of flavor.

Use lower-fat options Use heart-healthy canola, olive or peanut oil instead of butter or lard; low-fat milk instead of cream; and non-fat Greek yogurt instead of mayonnaise for dishes like potato salad.

Reinvent "fried foods" Instead of deep-frying traditional foods like fried chicken or fried okra, use an air fryer or oven to create crispiness without using excess fat.

Cook your fruit Fruit, like apples or peaches, can be baked ahead of time in honey to create a delicious, caramelized dessert. Top with crunchy oats, toasted almonds and a dollop of vanilla Greek yogurt.

Portion it out If you don't want to change a recipe, enjoy a smaller portion instead!

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Black-eyed pea fritters (from marisamoore.com)

Ingredients

- 2 cups cooked black-eyed peas, drained
- ½ cup whole cornmeal
- ¼ cup minced sweet or yellow onion
- 2 cloves garlic, grated
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 medium-sized hot pepper, minced
- ½ teaspoon coarse salt
- 2 - 3 tablespoons avocado, peanut or coconut oil for frying

Instructions

1. **Mix the batter:** Combine the black-eyed peas, cornmeal, onion, hot pepper, thyme, garlic and salt in a large mixing bowl. Mash all ingredients together until a dense paste forms.
2. **Form the patties:** Cut the paste into four equal parts. Roll and shape three patties from each part. Pan-fry right away or cover and refrigerate for up to one day.
3. **Pan-fry the fritters:** Heat the oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Fry the fritters in batches, cooking 3 - 4 minutes per side, flipping only once, until golden brown.
4. Drain the fritters on a paper towel-lined plate. Enjoy warm with or without hot sauce.