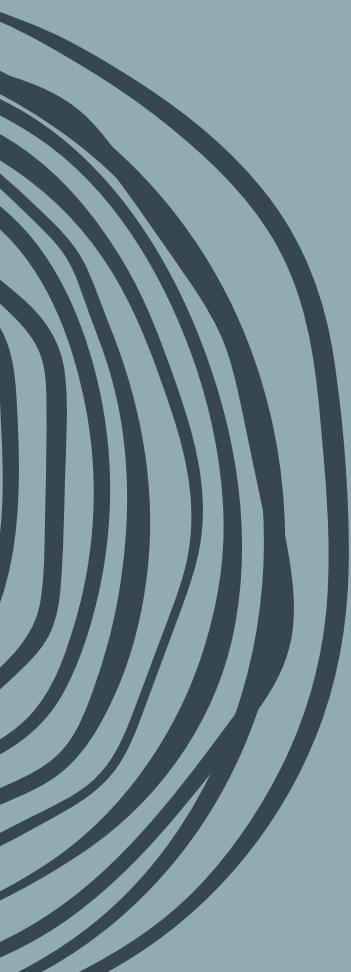


CULTURE & CUISINE

Digital Toolkit

*Food is more than nourishment.
It is identity, memory, connection, and culture.*



Culture & Cuisine Toolkit

Food is more than nourishment. It is identity, memory, connection, and culture.

Across communities food carries stories of land, migration, resilience, and celebration. It reflects how people gather, how traditions are passed on, and how belonging is created. Yet within dominant food narratives in Canada, many cultural foodways, particularly those rooted in Indigenous, racialized, and immigrant communities, have been underrepresented, simplified, or excluded.

The **Culture & Cuisine Toolkit** was developed to expand how we understand and engage with food. It moves beyond a narrow focus on "local" or dominant European food traditions and instead centres the diversity of cultural food practices that shape our communities.

This toolkit is designed to:

- **Broaden food narratives** to reflect diverse cultural traditions and lived experiences
- **Support cultural inclusion and belonging** through food
- **Strengthen food literacy** by integrating cultural knowledge, practices, and histories
- **Encourage reflection on equity and food systems**, including access, representation, and food sovereignty

Grounded in the understanding that food is deeply connected to culture, land, and community, this resource invites individuals and organizations to learn, reflect, and take action toward more inclusive and equitable food systems.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed for:

- Individuals and families interested in learning about cultural food traditions
- Educators and schools integrating food literacy and cultural learning
- Community organizations and nonprofits designing inclusive programs
- Food programs, institutions, and workplaces seeking to expand representation and inclusion

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is flexible and adaptable. Use it in different ways depending on your context:

1. Program & Event Planning

- Design culturally inclusive meals, workshops, or events
- Align programming with cultural celebrations and heritage months
- Introduce new foods and traditions into community spaces

2. Food Literacy & Education

- Use monthly sections to explore food traditions, ingredients, and practices
- Integrate cultural foods into cooking programs, school curricula, and workshops
- Support learning around food, identity, and cultural connection

3. Workplace & Organizational Practice

- Build awareness of cultural food practices within teams
- Create inclusive food policies and shared meals
- Recognize and celebrate cultural events in meaningful ways

4. Community Conversations & Reflection

- Facilitate discussions about food, culture, and belonging
- Explore whose food traditions are visible—and whose are not
- Reflect on barriers to accessing cultural foods

5. Advancing Equity in Food Systems

- Consider how food traditions have been impacted by colonization, migration, and systemic barriers
- Support culturally relevant food access in programs and services
- Engage with food as a pathway to equity, reconciliation, and community wellbeing

What's Inside...

Each month includes:

- Heritage months and key cultural observances
- Cultural and religious celebrations connected to food
- Seasonal context from the WSÁNEĆ calendar
- Examples of foods, traditions, and practices

Where possible, sections also include:

- Cultural context and meaning
- Social and historical considerations
- Opportunities for learning and engagement



There are also some additional tools to support menu planning, events and conversations

A Living Resource

This toolkit is not exhaustive. Cultural food practices are dynamic, evolving, and deeply rooted in community knowledge. *We invite ongoing contributions, feedback, and additions to ensure this resource continues to reflect the richness and diversity of the communities it serves.*

Food, Culture & Justice

Food is deeply shaped by history, power, and access. In Canada, colonization disrupted Indigenous food systems by displacing communities from their lands, restricting access to traditional harvesting practices, and imposing external food systems that undermined longstanding relationships between land, culture, and sustenance. At the same time, migration has continually reshaped food traditions, as communities adapt recipes, ingredients, and practices in response to new environments, availability, and social conditions while maintaining cultural connections through food.

Despite this richness, cultural foods are often less accessible, more expensive, or absent from mainstream food environments, creating barriers for many individuals and families. Access to cultural food is not just about preference, it is tied to dignity, identity, and overall health. Ensuring that people can access and share the foods that reflect their cultures is an important part of building inclusive, equitable, and resilient food systems.

*CRFAIR would like to thank Ruba Elfurjani for her leadership on this project.
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January

January at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Tamil Heritage Month

January in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: NINENE – Moon of the child

Key Celebrations & Observances: Lohri, Makar Sankranti, Vasant Panchami

January Heritage Months

Tamil Heritage Month

January is Tamil Heritage month; celebrating Tamil culture which comes from South India and Sri Lanka. Tamil is one of the world's oldest cultures; beginning over 2,000 years ago, and it is renowned for its art, music, dance, and festivals like Pongal. Specific traditions include Bharatanatyam (classical dance form), Pongal celebrations, and temple architecture. Tamil cuisine from Southern India commonly utilises rice, lentils, tamarind, coconut, and blends of spices including curry leaves, mustard seeds, and chilies.



January in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

NINENE – Moon of the Child (Mid December to Mid January)

In the WSÁNEĆ Calendar, January falls under NINENE - Moon of the Child, representing youth, new beginnings and the rebirth of the natural world. This is the New Year for Saanich Peoples.

During this time, there is typically little hunting and fishing happening; instead, stocks of fish and game from the previous year that had been dried and stored are eaten, and efforts go into weaving, producing tools and fishing nets and preparing for the new year. The new moon also signals the season when fawns start to be born, so this is recognized as a time to stop deer hunting.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



January Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Lohri (January 13th, 2026)

Overview: Lohri is a Punjabi winter folk festival that marks the end of winter and the harvest of crops; it is closely tied to the winter solstice. During this festival, bonfires are lit, symbolizing the sun and transition of seasons from winter to spring.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food plays an important role in Lohri, and usually before eating, offerings are made to the bonfire and a symbol of gratitude and abundance. Rituals include communal gatherings, singing, and sharing foods.

Food, Culture & Justice: Punjabi food traditions have spread through migration and diaspora communities, shaping global awareness of dishes like saag and roti. Some key ingredients, such as mustard greens or jaggery, can be less accessible locally, though substitutes are often used. There is also a risk of cultural flattening when Punjabi cuisine is generalized within broader "Indian food" in Western contexts.



Feature Dishes

- Sarson da Saag
- Makki di Roti
- Til and jaggery sweets

Makar Sankranti (January 14th, 2026)

Overview: Makar Sankranti marks the sun's shift into Capricorn and the start of longer days. In Tamil Nadu, it is celebrated as Thai Pongal over four days, each with distinct agricultural and spiritual significance.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is central as ritual offering and celebration. Sakkarai pongal is prepared and offered at an auspicious moment, often cooked outdoors as it boils over to symbolize abundance. Feasting, sharing meals, and honouring the sun, land, and cattle are key practices.

Food, Culture & Justice: Celebrated widely through Tamil diaspora communities. Some ingredients, like jaggery or traditional rice varieties, may be less accessible locally, leading to adaptations. The festival emphasizes connections between food, land, and agricultural labour that are often obscured in modern food systems.



Feature Dishes

- Sakkarai pongal
- Vadai
- Plain rice

Vasant Panchami (January 23rd, 2026)

Overview: Vasant Panchami marks the transition toward spring and is dedicated to Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, arts, and learning.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is symbolic, often featuring yellow dishes representing spring and prosperity. Offerings are made to Saraswati, and families may prepare and share simple meals after पूजा. Rituals focus on worship, learning, and cultural expression.

Food, Culture & Justice: The festival is widely celebrated across South Asian diaspora communities, adapting to local ingredient availability. Saffron and some traditional ingredients can be costly or harder to access locally. Cultural practices tied to learning and art highlight values that are sometimes overlooked in Western seasonal celebrations.



Feature Dishes

- Kesari
- Boondi
- Laddoo

February

February at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Black History Month

February in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: WEXES – Moon of the Frog

Key Celebrations & Observances: Lunar New Year, Tu Bishvat, Maha Shivratri

February Heritage Months

Black History Month

Black History Month is observed in February. It's a time to celebrate and reflect upon the connections between Black culture, food, community, and resilience. Across the African diaspora, food traditions carry stories of migration, survival, creativity, and resistance, shaping cuisines and food systems all around the world. Black farmers, cooks, entrepreneurs, and organizers have long contributed to local food economies and movements for food sovereignty, advocating for equitable access to land, culturally meaningful food, and community self-determination. During this month, it's a great time to support local Black-owned restaurants and food businesses.



February in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

WEXES – Moon of the Frog (Mid February - Mid March)

The frog on the face of this moon represents DOLUANW – the Keeper of the Sacred Season. For Saanich People, it is recognized as the time to gather foods and medicine, end winter activities (such as ceremonial dances) and shift to outdoors activities. February & March are recognized as the 'season of plenty', announced by the frog, who is the keeper of the sacred season, and would often appear on totem poles. February and March marks the warming of earth and the coming of spring in the Northern Hemisphere, rains diminish, there is more sunshine, and animals begin to wake from their hibernation. This shift in weather signalled that it was now safer to travel by canoe on the ocean, and the gathering of herring and herring roe begins again. Herring would be dried and stored for future use.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



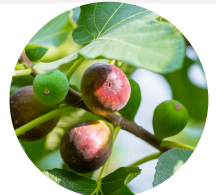
February Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Tu Bishvat (February 1st, 2026)

Overview: Tu Bishvat, often called the "New Year of the Trees," is a Jewish holiday that celebrates nature and the relationship between people and the land. The holiday has also become associated with environmental stewardship, tree planting, and ecological awareness.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is important to Tu Bishvat celebrations, particularly fruits and nuts connected to the land and harvest traditions. Many people eat symbolic foods; figs, dates, olives, pomegranates, grapes & almonds.

Feature Foods: Pomegranate, Dates, Fig and Nut Cake



Maha Shivratri (February 15th, 2026)

Overview: Maha Shivratri, meaning "The Great Night of Shiva," is a Hindu festival honouring Shiva & celebrating reflection and devotion.

Cultural & Food Practices: Many people fast or eat simple vegetarian foods such as fruit, milk, nuts, and potatoes. Meals emphasize mindfulness, self-discipline, and community gathering through shared prayer and tradition.

Food, Culture & Justice: Maha Shivratri vary across region; shaped by local ingredients. Across Canada, Hindu communities and South Asian food businesses help preserve cultural food traditions and strengthen community connections.

Feature Dishes: Sabudana Khichdi, Kheer, Aloo Peanut Chaat



Lunar New Year (February 17th, 2026)

Overview: Lunar New Year marks the beginning of the lunar calendar and is celebrated across many Asian cultures, including Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and others.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food carries symbolic meanings tied to luck, abundance, longevity, and prosperity. Families gather to prepare and share traditional foods; dumplings, noodles, rice cakes, spring rolls, and whole fish.

Food, Culture & Justice: Food traditions have evolved through migration, adaptation to place, and access to ingredients. Across Canada, Asian community & businesses play an important role in preserving cultural traditions.

Feature Dishes: Dumplings, Longevity Noodles, Whole Fish



Ash Wednesday (February 18th, 2026)

Overview: Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent; a 40 day reflection period, including fasting, and repentance before Easter.

Cultural & Food Practices:

Fasting and abstaining from meat are the main food practices. Meals are simple; often plant based or fish based; practicing restraint.

Feature Dishes: Hot Cross Buns



March

March at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Irish Heritage Month

March in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: PEXSISEN – The Moon of Opening Hands the Blossoming out Moon

Key Celebrations & Observances: International Women's Day, Ash Wednesday, Holi, St. Patrick's Day, Nowruz, Ramadan

March Heritage Months

Irish Heritage Month

Irish Heritage Month recognizes and celebrates Irish culture and history. The Irish have played a significant role in shaping Canada, from early immigration to modern-day influences in politics, arts, and business. Celebrations from this month usually include events showcasing Irish music, dance, and literature, community gatherings and storytelling, displays of Irish symbols like the shamrock and the harp. Over 4.6 million Canadians claim Irish ancestry, making Irish heritage one of the most prominent in Canada.



March in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

PEXSISEN – The Moon of Opening Hands the Blossoming out Moon (Mid March - Mid April)

Under the PEXSISEN moon, plants and trees bloom and open their hands again, renewing its strength, just as the Saanich Peoples often open their hands to show thanks. During this moon, the weather becomes warmer and the land becomes dryer, making drying and preservation of foods easier. Brant Geese, or, XELXELJ are typically hunted using float nets and dried for future use during this season. Additionally, other seafoods such as clams, oysters and mussels are at their best during this time, and would be harvested too.

Canoes and other tools were crafted during this season; because cedar trees would typically fall, and warmer weather caused tree sap to run up trees, making bark stripping much easier too. This bark is used for weaving mats and clothing. Prior to the raising of sheep, Saanich peoples would use dog or goat hair to make yarn and knit fibres, which would shed in the spring due to the warmer weather.



Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)

March Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

International Women's Day (March 8th, 2026)

International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8th, is a global event recognizing the achievements of women and advocating for gender equality, highlighting progress in women's rights & acknowledging ongoing challenges. The day is marked by rallies, discussions, and initiatives that empower women in all aspects of life, from politics and business to science and the arts.



Reflecting on Women's Day & Food Systems

'According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in developing nations, if women worldwide had the same access as men to information, land, improved technologies, financing and markets, they could increase their agricultural yields by up to 30 per cent, and lift more than 100 million people out of hunger. By investing in women, we truly strengthen the economy for everyone.'
- *Government of Canada, 2022.*

Holi (March 4th, 2026)

Overview: Holi (or 'Festival of Colours') is a Hindu event celebrating the arrival of spring, the triumph of good over evil. People celebrate by throwing colored powders (gulal) and water, singing, dancing, and sharing sweets.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is festive and shared among family and community. Sweets and rich dishes are prepared for gatherings, highlighting abundance and celebration rather than restriction. Community comes together to cook and share food together during Holi.

Food, Culture & Justice: Holi foods have spread through diaspora communities, with adaptations based on local ingredient access. Items like khoya or saffron can be harder to source or more expensive locally. Holi is sometimes commercialized in Western contexts, which can overlook its cultural and religious significance.



Feature Dishes

- Gujiya
- Thandai
- Dahi vada

St. Patrick's Day (March 17th, 2026)

Overview: St. Patrick's Day honours Saint Patrick and has evolved into a global celebration of Irish identity & heritage.

Cultural & Food Practices: Hearty, comforting meals are commonly shared in homes and public gatherings, and Guinness is often enjoyed too.

Food, Culture & Justice: Some foods, like corned beef and cabbage, reflect Irish diaspora adaptations rather than traditional Irish cuisine. Cultural meaning of this holiday can be diluted through commercialization; the holiday's global popularity can sometimes overshadow its historical and religious roots, although it is still widely enjoyed as a celebration across the world.



Feature Dishes

- Corned beef & cabbage
- Irish soda bread
- Lamb or beef stew

Norwuz (March 20th, 2026)

Overview: Nowruz marks the New Year in the Iranian calendar and the arrival of spring.

Cultural & Food Practices: For Nowruz, food is deeply symbolic, especially through the Haft-Seen table; which is prepared featuring seven items representing health, growth, and renewal. Families prepare and share festive meals, highlighting the importance of hospitality and tradition.

Food, Culture & Justice: Nowruz traditions have spread through diaspora communities, adapting to local contexts. Some ingredients, like sumac or specific herbs, may be less accessible locally. Cultural practices have persisted despite historical displacement and political pressures in parts of the region.



Feature Dishes

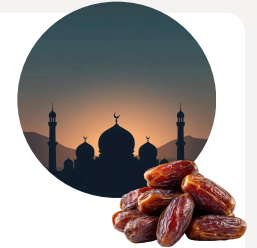
- Sabzeh
- Samanu
- Dishes with sumac

Ramadan (February 18th - March 19th, 2026)

Overview: Ramadan commemorates the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad and is a time of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. The month concludes with Eid al-Fitr, a celebration of gratitude and generosity.

Cultural & Food Practices: The main component of Ramadan is fasting from dawn to sunset, with two key meals; Suhoor, eaten before dawn, focuses on nourishing and hydrating foods to sustain the day. **Iftar**, the evening meal, begins with breaking the fast, often with dates and water, followed by a variety of shared dishes. Meals are frequently prepared and enjoyed communally. Charity and food sharing are also key practices throughout the month and at Eid.

Food, Culture & Justice: Ramadan food traditions vary widely across cultures and have evolved through global Muslim diaspora communities. Some ingredients or specialty sweets may be less accessible or more expensive locally, shaping how traditions are practiced. The emphasis on charity and feeding others highlights food justice values, especially supporting those experiencing food insecurity.



Feature Dishes

- Dates (to break fast)
- Lentil soup (shorabet adas)
- Baklava or qatayef



Supporting Peers, Colleagues or Students Partaking in Ramadan

- **Be aware of fasting times & offer flexibility:** Food or drink is not consumed during daylight hours; be considerate of long meetings or strenuous activity during fasting, as energy levels may vary.
- **Provide respectful spaces for prayer wudu rituals:** Muslims may pray up to 5 times a day during Ramadan, and partake in Wudu rituals (cleansing of face, hands, arms and feet) before prayers.
- **Use appropriate greetings, such as:** "Ramadan Murbarak" (Have a blessed Ramadan) or "Ramadan Kareem"
- **Ask respectful questions & celebrate together**

April

April at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Sikh Heritage Month

April in the WŚÁNEĆ Calendar: SXÁNEL – Bullhead Moon

Key Celebrations & Observances: Hanuman Jayanti, Passover, Vaisakhi, Puthandu, Theravada New Year, Easter

April Heritage Months

Sikh Heritage Month

Sikh Heritage Month celebrates the contributions of the Sikh community in Canada and beyond. Since the late 19th century, Sikhs have played a vital role in Canadian society, despite facing systemic racism, such as the 1914 Komagata Maru incident and ongoing challenges related to religious freedom. Sikh Canadians have shown resilience, guided by the principle of seva (selfless service). Today, Canada is home to one of the largest Sikh populations outside India, and the Punjabi language is among the most spoken in the country. Food plays a central role in the core principles of Sikh culture.

One of the most significant aspects of Sikh food culture is the practice of **langar**, the community kitchen that provides free meals to all, regardless of background, religion, or social status. This tradition originated with Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, and continues to symbolize the Sikh commitment to selfless service and humility. The meals served in langar are typically vegetarian, reflecting the Sikh belief in nonviolence and respect for all living beings. Popular dishes in Sikh cuisine include dal (lentils), roti (flatbread), sabzi (vegetable curries), and kheer (a sweet rice pudding).



April in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

SXÁNEL – Bullhead Moon (Date)

SXÁNEL translates to Bullhead Moon - referring to bullhead fish; which live most of their life deep underwater, however to Saanich Peoples, this time of year marks a season where bullheads emerge from the depths and appear on the shore. Traditionally, Elder women would take woven baskets to the beach and gather bullhead fish from under the rocks, which were a great delicacy. As they were collected, the bullheads would say 'SKA' (their name). During this season, LEKES (seaweed) was also harvested. Halibut fishing came to an end during this moon because it is the time that halibut spawn. Grouse hatched during this time, and larger grouse were caught easily in wooded areas.

Under this moon, PIOTEL (a group of stars in Orion's Belt) appears on the horizon, and strong winds typically occur, bringing with them swallows, but also sudden thunder and lightening storms.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



April Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Hanuman Jayanti (March 31st - April 1st)

Overview: Hanuman Jayanti celebrates the birth of Lord Hanuman, a figure that symbolizes strength and devotion in Hindu culture. It is observed with prayer, hymns, community gatherings.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is prepared as prasadam, meaning blessed offerings shared after being presented in पूजा. Devotional foods are offered to Hanuman and then distributed among family and community members, reinforcing collective worship and gratitude. Preparation is often simple and symbolic rather than elaborate.

Food, Culture & Justice: Food traditions are widely practiced across Hindu communities and diaspora settings, often adapting to local ingredient availability. Some devotional sweets rely on ingredients like ghee or sugar, which may be less accessible in different contexts. The practice of sharing prasadam emphasizes communal care and food distribution as part of spiritual life.



Feature Dishes

- Laddoos
- Kheer
- Pakoras

Passover (April 1st - April 9th)

Overview: Passover (Pesach) is a Jewish tradition that commemorates the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt and the Exodus story. Remembrance and intergenerational storytelling are important.

Cultural & Food Practices: Seder is a ritual meal where symbolic dishes are used to retell the Exodus narrative. Dietary laws remove leavened foods (chametz), so unleavened bread is eaten instead. Families gather to read, reflect, and share meals whilst telling stories.

Food, Culture & Justice: Passover foods are shaped by historical displacement and diaspora, with variations across Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi communities. Ingredients like matzo are widely available in many regions, though kosher-for-Passover foods can be more expensive or limited in some areas.



Feature Dishes

- Matzo
- Matzo ball soup
- Charoset

May

May at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Asian Heritage Month

May in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: PEN'AWEN – Moon of the Camas Harvest

Key Celebrations & Observances: Cinco De Mayo, Vesak / Buddha Day

May Heritage Months

Asian Heritage Month

In Canada, May is Asian Heritage Month, which is a month to celebrate and learn about Asian cultures and histories. Asian Canadian chefs, farmers, and leaders have helped shape Canada's culinary landscape; this month is a great time to explore and appreciate the diversity of Asian culture through storytelling, food, celebrations and learning.

It's also a time to reflect on the challenges faced by Asian communities, including racism and exclusion, and to amplify voices, histories that have often been overlooked. Asian communities in Canada are incredibly diverse, including people with roots in countries such as China, India, the Philippines, Pakistan, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, and many more. Across the diaspora, communities have built strong cultural networks, community centers, faith institutions, businesses, and grassroots organizations that support cultural preservation, intergenerational connection, and mutual aid. From Chinatown's community kitchens to South Asian youth advocacy groups, these spaces are vital for connection and cultural resilience.



May in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

PEN'AWEN – Moon of the Camas Harvest (May)

During this moon, the earth is warming, and it is known as the moon of camas harvest, the time to dig KLO,EL (camas) from the ground. The camas plant is a bulb with a blue flower above, and the bulb traditionally served as a main source of starch in the Saanich People's diet. During this moon, families would travel to special family locations to harvest the bulbs. This time is cherished as it symbolizes the time when people could travel across their territories again, after a cold and wet winter.

Saanich families had different traditional grounds which were used at different times of the year. During this moon, winter villages were left for Spring camps, where bulbs were harvested, as well as fresh gull eggs which could be found in these fields. Important to note that there are different types of camas: the blue, which was harvested and eaten, and the white, which are poisonous. During this moon, XIWE (purple sea urchins) and SQITI (green sea urchins) were also harvested.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



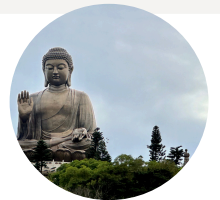
May Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Vesak / Buddha Day (May 1st, 2026)

Overview: Vesak, or Buddha Day, is the most sacred Buddhist holiday, marking the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food reflects Buddhist values of non-violence, generosity, and mindfulness. Many communities prepare vegetarian meals and share food freely, including temple offerings and communal meals. Some temples provide free meals to the public as an act of generosity. Eating is often simple and intentional, emphasizing gratitude and compassion over excess.

Food, Culture & Justice: Vesak food traditions vary widely across Buddhist communities in South and Southeast Asia and diaspora contexts. Access to traditional ingredients can differ globally, leading to localized adaptations of vegetarian dishes. The emphasis on food sharing and free community meals highlights food as a form of care and mutual support, especially in contexts of economic inequality.



Feature Dishes

- Vegetarian rice and curry
- Sweet rice porridge
- Bananas & coconuts

Cinco de Mayo (May 5th, 2026)

Overview: Commemorates the Mexican victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. It is a celebration of Mexican history & cultural pride, though it is more widely observed in the United States than in Mexico.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is often shared in gatherings and highlight regional Mexican cuisines. Meals are eaten communally, centering traditional cooking methods and family recipes.

Food, Culture & Justice: Mexican cuisine reflects Indigenous and mestizo food histories, shaped by colonization, migration, and regional diversity. In North America, Cinco de Mayo is often commercialized in ways that can flatten or stereotype Mexican culture. Supporting authentic Mexican-owned restaurants and acknowledging regional specificity helps resist cultural appropriation and supports food sovereignty.



Feature Dishes

- Mole poblano
- Tacos al pastor
- Tamales

June

June at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Indigenous History Month, Filipino Heritage Month, Portuguese Heritage Month, Italian Heritage Month

June the W̱SÁNEĆ Calendar: CENTEKI – The Sockeye Moon

Key Celebrations & Observances: Muharram, Canadian Multiculturalism Day

June Heritage Months

Indigenous History Month

In Canada, June is observed as History Month, honoring the history and celebrating the cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples across Canada.

Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island have long cultivated a relationship with the land that centers sustainability, reciprocity, and seasonal wisdom. Indigenous cuisines vary widely across nations and regions, but commonly feature ingredients and dishes such as wild rice, salmon, Bannock, berries, and game meats.

Food is not just sustenance; it is ceremony, language, and medicine. Cooking and sharing traditional foods reclaims cultural identity and strengthens community ties. Indigenous chefs and food leaders are reclaiming food sovereignty by reviving ancestral food practices, operating indigenous-owned food businesses, and resisting colonial food systems.



Filipino Heritage Month

June is also Filipino Heritage Month in Canada. Filipino Canadians represent one of the fastest-growing cultural groups in Canada, with around 1 million Canadians identifying as Filipino in 2025.

Filipino culture is a mix of indigenous, Spanish, Chinese and American influences, characterized by strong family and community connections, deep respect for elders, exceptional hospitality, and a resilient, community-focused spirit known as bayanihan (community cooperation). Filipino cuisine is a fusion of these influences, and food plays a central role in Filipino hospitality and celebration, from kamayan (eating with hands) feasts to street food shared at town fiestas.



Portuguese Heritage Month

Portuguese Heritage Month celebrates the culture and traditions of Portuguese communities. In Canada, almost 500,000 people claim Portuguese ancestry, and the culture and heritage is expressed through music, language, art, and shared customs, and from the soulful sounds of fado to colourful festivals and long-standing traditions, this month offers a chance to learn about the history of Portuguese culture, community and cuisine in Canada.



Italian Heritage Month

Similarly, Italian Heritage Month, also observed in June, celebrates Italian culture and traditions including cuisine. In Canada, over 1.5 million people claim Italian ancestry, shaped by waves of immigration in the late 19th and mid 20th centuries, when many Italians arrived seeking economic opportunity and helped build industries, neighbourhoods, and cultural institutions across the country.

Today, Italian Canadian communities continue to play a significant role in Canada's social, cultural life and economy. Food is extremely important to expressing Italian heritage, rooted in regional diversity and the importance of family recipes and traditions. Dishes like pasta, risotto, pizza, and polenta reflect local ingredients and histories from across Italy, while recipes are often passed down through generations. Italian cuisine in Canada has also evolved through the diaspora, adapting to local ingredients while maintaining cultural identity.



June in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

CENTEKI – The Sockeye Moon (June)

This moon is named after the sockeye salmon, which returns during this month. In Saanich People's history; it's said that the people used to be poor, but were taken pity on by the Salmon people, who taught them how to fish and honour the salmon, ultimately saving them.

Salmon Ceremonies

At the beginning of this moon, a salmon ceremony is performed before the nets were dropped at the ancestors' hereditary locations. The ceremony included the medicine man (SNAEM) paddling far east, and calling on his ancient relatives of the salmon through songs and prayers, asking them to let themselves be caught to feed the Saanich People. The salmon would be fished through four months of the summer. During this time, berries such as DILEK (wild strawberries) and ELI.LE (salmonberries) began to ripen.

Because the Saanich Peoples were located on the straights, they were able to catch a higher quality of salmon before other tribes, giving them a trading advantage. Songs and ceremonies took place to pay respects and celebrate the salmon, and as soon as S.HIWEK (salmon leader) was caught, fishing would cease and the ceremony of prayer and feasting would begin.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



June Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Muharram (June 16th, 2026)

Overview: Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, marking the Islamic New Year. It is considered a sacred month where conflict is traditionally forbidden. The 10th day, Ashura, is especially significant for commemorating key historical events, including the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS) at the Battle of Karbala.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food practices during Muharram vary by tradition and region. The period is often marked by reflection and mourning rather than celebration, especially among Shia Muslim communities during Ashura. In some contexts, simple meals are prepared and shared as part of charitable giving, with an emphasis on feeding others in remembrance and community care rather than feasting.

Food, Culture & Justice: Muharram food traditions reflect diversity within the global Muslim community, with significant variation between cultural and sectarian practices. In some regions, communal food distribution (nazar or charity meals) supports food access for those in need, linking remembrance with social care. Diaspora communities may adapt traditional dishes based on ingredient availability.



Feature Dishes

- Kichdi
- Lentil-based stews or soups
- Dates and plain breads shared in charitable meals

National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st, 2026)

In Canada, National Indigenous Peoples Day takes place June 21st; the summer solstice and longest day of the year. Throughout First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, their cultures and traditions were typically celebrated during this time of the year, and as such, the summer solstice is a time of deep spiritual significance. Typically on this day, First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities hold events to share and celebrate their diverse and rich cultures and traditions; attending these events is a great way to get involved and celebrate, whilst contributing to learning and reconciliation.

Food & Indigenous Peoples Day

Throughout Indigenous communities, food plays a vital role, not just as sustenance, but as medicine, tradition and community connections. Traditional foods include bison, salmon, berries and bannock are often enjoyed during this time of the year. This day is a great opportunity to learn about Indigenous food systems and support local Indigenous restaurants and makers.

Canadian Multiculturalism Day (June 27th, 2026)

Canadian Multiculturalism Day (June 27) recognizes the diversity of cultural communities in Canada and their contributions to society, including food systems. Food is a key expression of culture, identity, and heritage, with immigrant, newcomer, and Indigenous communities shaping Canada's culinary landscape through traditional and evolving cuisines.

This diversity strengthens local food economies by supporting culturally specific food businesses, expanding markets, and enriching food experiences. It also highlights issues of equity, including access to land, capital, and visibility for racialized food entrepreneurs. Celebrating multiculturalism in food systems means valuing cultural knowledge as essential to building inclusive, resilient, and representative food systems.

July

July at a Glance

July the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: CENHENEN – Humpback Salmon Return to Earth

Key Celebrations & Observances: Tish'a B'av, Asalha Puja

July in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

CENHENEN – Humpback Salmon Return to Earth (July)

Under this moon, the Humpback Salmon return to earth. This is one of the driest seasons on the West Coast, which is useful for drying out and preserving foods such as salmon (SDÁL), but also means grasslands and forests are extremely dry and risk for fires is high.

During this month, fishing of the Humpback salmon occurred, and catchment areas expanded as far as Tsawwassen and Point Roberts, where fishing camps were set up. Fishing was successful, and community gatherings were held to celebrate and share fishing success with others. As a result, family ties and history forms a central focus of this month, with events such as STÁNEK (memorial potlatches), namings (giving of a name ceremonies), weddings and societal ceremonies (e.g. blessings) taking place.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



July Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Tish'a B'av (July 22nd - 23rd, 2026)

Overview: Tish'a B'Av is a solemn day of mourning that commemorates major tragedies in Jewish history, including the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem. The day centers remembrance, grief, and reflection.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food practices are shaped by fasting and mourning. A full fast is observed from sunset to nightfall the next day, with abstinence from food and drink. Additional restrictions in some traditions include avoiding bathing, wearing leather, shaving, and certain forms of leisure. Meals before and after the fast are typically simple and light.

Food, Culture & Justice: Tish'a B'Av food practices reflect a long history of displacement, loss, and resilience within Jewish communities. Observance varies across Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi traditions, and among diaspora communities globally. The simplicity of food during this period reflects themes of scarcity and mourning, connecting historical trauma to embodied ritual practice.



Feature Dishes

- Eggs and bread dipped in ash
- Simple lentil soup
- Plain bread and water-based foods after the fast

Asalha Puja (July 29th, 2026)

Overview: Asalha Bucha Day (Asalha Puja) commemorates the Buddha's first sermon and the establishment of the Four Noble Truths, marking the foundation of Buddhist teaching after his enlightenment.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is prepared with emphasis on mindfulness, simplicity, and non-harming (ahimsa). Many Buddhists observe vegetarian meals, often offered first at temples as merit-making before being shared in community settings. Meals follow chanting and teachings, reinforcing reflection and spiritual practice through collective gathering and giving.

Food, Culture & Justice: Asalha Bucha food traditions vary across Theravada Buddhist communities in Southeast Asia and diaspora settings. Some ingredients like fresh mango or specific tropical staples may be less accessible in different regions, leading to adaptations. The practice of offering and sharing food emphasizes generosity and communal care, linking food directly to ethical living and social responsibility.



Feature Dishes

- Coconut milk curries
- Sweet sticky rice with mango
- Mung bean desserts or banana leaf wrapped rice (khao tom)

August

August at a Glance

August the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: CENTÁWEN – The Coho Salmon Return to Earth

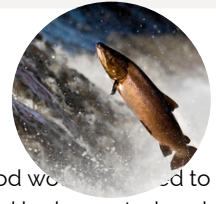
August in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

CENTÁWEN – The Coho Salmon Return to Earth (August)

Under this moon, the Coho Salmon returns to earth. This moon depicts a half-salmon, half-human, to remind the Saanich People that salmon were human at one time. During this month, typically the first rains begin, signalling the end of the summer drought. Water flow to rivers and streams increase, meaning salmon that have gathered in inlets can now begin their spawning journey.

Cod are also commonly fished during this moon. Sea urchins would be used to bait Tommy Cod, and Tommy Cod would be used to bait the larger Ling Cod, which were hunted with spears. In the forests, deer hunting resumed, and other plants would be harvested such as Hog Fennel (KEXMIN), which was used in many medicines.

Source: *13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ (Garry Fletcher)*



September

September at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Ukrainian Heritage Month

September the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: ĆENQOLEW_ - Moon of the Dog Salmon

Key Celebrations: National day of Truth and Reconciliation, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pitru Paksha

September Heritage Months

Ukrainian Heritage Month

Ukrainian Heritage Month in Canada celebrates Ukrainian culture and tradition, including cuisine. It highlights traditional foods such as borscht, perogies, holubtsi, and babka, reflecting culinary roots and shared cultural identity across generations. In Canada, Ukrainian festivals, community halls, and family gatherings preserve heritage while connecting diaspora communities with Ukraine's traditions and history.



September in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

ĆENQOLEW - Moon of the Dog Salmon (September)

ĆENQOLEW marks the arrival of the Dog (Chum) Salmon. This Moon roughly aligns with the month of September. This time of year is marked by the return of the rains, which make the rivers rise, and welcome the return of the Dog Salmon to streams, where they spawn. Salmon runs take place in Goldstream. Berry picking would be best in some locations such as Langford during this time as well. During this season, cod fishing is common, as well as hunting for deer and grouse. Trailing blackberry, sea urchin, and arbutus berries are abundant under this moon.

Source: *13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ (Garry Fletcher)*

September Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Krishna Janmashtami (September 4th, 2026)

Overview: Asalha Bucha Day (Asalha Puja) commemorates the Buddha's first sermon and the establishment of the Four Noble Truths, marking the foundation of Buddhist teaching after his enlightenment.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is prepared with emphasis on mindfulness, simplicity, and non-harming (ahimsa). Many Buddhists observe vegetarian meals, often offered first at temples as merit-making before being shared in community settings. Meals follow chanting and teachings, reinforcing reflection and spiritual practice through collective gathering and giving.

Food, Culture & Justice: Asalha Bucha food traditions vary across Theravada Buddhist communities in Southeast Asia and diaspora settings. Some ingredients like fresh mango or specific tropical staples may be less accessible in different regions, leading to adaptations. The practice of offering and sharing food emphasizes generosity and communal care, linking food directly to ethical living and social responsibility.



Feature Dishes

- Coconut milk curries
- Sweet sticky rice with mango
- Mung bean desserts or banana leaf wrapped rice (khao tom)

Rosh Hashanah (September 11th - 13th, 2026)

Overview: Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of the Jewish New Year, and means “Head of the Year.”

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is symbolic and central to celebration. Ritual meals include foods that represent blessings, sweetness, and protection from harm. Families gather for festive meals where specific foods are eaten with intention, often paired with prayers and blessings that reflect hopes for the coming year.

Food, Culture & Justice: Rosh Hashanah food traditions vary across Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jewish communities, shaped by migration and regional adaptation. Ingredients and dishes differ globally, reflecting diaspora histories and local availability. Some symbolic foods may be less accessible in certain regions, but traditions are often adapted while maintaining their ritual meanings of continuity, resilience, and cultural identity.



Feature Dishes

- Apples dipped in honey
- Gefilte fish
- Dates and symbolic vegetables

Yom Kippur (September 20th - 21st, 2026)

Overview: Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is the holiest day in Judaism. It is dedicated to fasting, prayer, repentance, and spiritual reflection, with the aim of seeking forgiveness.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is structured around preparation for and breaking the fast. Before the fast, a seudah mafseket (“separating meal”) is eaten to sustain individuals through the day. After the fast, the break-fast meal is often shared communally and focuses on gentle, easy-to-digest foods. Meals emphasize comfort, restoration, and togetherness after a day of abstinence.

Food, Culture & Justice: Yom Kippur food traditions vary across Jewish communities, shaped by Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi practices and diaspora adaptation. Ingredients like lox or specific baked goods may be less accessible or substituted in different regions. The emphasis on breaking the fast together highlights communal care and restoration, reinforcing food’s role in recovery, belonging, and continuity after ritual deprivation.



Feature Dishes

- Challah
- Bagels with lox and cream cheese
- Kugel

Pitri Paksha (September 26th - October 10th, 2026)

Overview: Pitru Paksha is a 16-day period in the Hindu lunar calendar when ancestors are honored through rituals of remembrance and offerings. It is considered a spiritually significant time when families perform shraddha to help nourish ancestral souls and seek their blessings for well-being and balance.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is prepared as offerings to ancestors (shraddha), following Sattvic principles of purity and simplicity. Meals are vegetarian and traditionally exclude onion and garlic. Foods are cooked with intention, often using ghee and served on leaves, with rituals that include offerings believed to nourish and honour ancestral spirits. Black sesame seeds are commonly used as part of ritual offerings.

Food, Culture & Justice: Pitri Paksha food practices reflect long-standing Hindu ancestral traditions that vary by region and community. Access to certain seasonal ingredients or ritual practices may differ across diaspora contexts, leading to adaptations. The emphasis on food as an offering highlights relationships between the living and the dead, and reinforces ideas of gratitude, lineage, and continuity through shared meals.



Feature Dishes

- Kheer
- Puri
- Dal with seasonal vegetables like pumpkin

National Day of Truth & Reconciliation (30th September, 2026)

September 30th marks the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in recognition and acknowledgement of Canada’s violence, both past and present, against Indigenous Peoples. The inter-generational trauma of the Residential School System persists in many forms to this day, impacting the daily lives of survivors and their families. This day also serves as an opportunity to recognize and advocate for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls & Two-Spirit Peoples from communities across the country. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlights 94 calls to action to address Child welfare, Education, Language and Culture, Health, Justice, and Reconciliation. You can read each of the calls to action on the [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation’s Website](#).



♥ Decolonizing our Food Systems

Decolonizing food systems means recognizing and challenging the colonial systems, histories, and power dynamics that have shaped how food is grown, distributed, sold, valued, and consumed. It means respecting Indigenous sovereignty, cultural foodways, land stewardship practices, and diverse ways of knowing, while creating food systems that are equitable, inclusive, regenerative, and community-led. Decolonization applies across all parts of the food system from farming and harvesting to processing, marketing, retail, policy, education, and waste management and asks us to consider who holds power, whose knowledge is valued, who benefits, and who is excluded.

Some questions to reflect upon:

- Whose food traditions, knowledge, and labour are recognized, celebrated, or overlooked?
- How can local and Indigenous food knowledge, stewardship, and cultural practices be respected and supported?
- Are food initiatives accessible, affordable, culturally relevant, and welcoming to diverse communities?
- How can purchasing, partnerships, and programming better support small-scale, Indigenous, newcomer, and equity-deserving food businesses and producers?
- What assumptions shape ideas of “healthy,” “local,” or “good” food, and whose perspectives define these standards?

October

October at a Glance

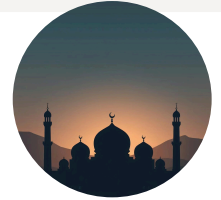
Heritage Month(s): Canadian Islamic Heritage Month, German Heritage Month
October the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: PEKELANEW – The Moon That Turns the Leaves White
Key Celebrations: Dussehra, Canadian Thanksgiving, Diwali, Halloween

October Heritage Months

Canadian Islamic Heritage Month

October is recognized as Islamic Heritage Month in Canada, a month to honour and celebrate the history and culture of Muslim communities. Celebrations often highlight art, music, and storytelling, as well as the diverse foods that are central to Islamic cultures. From community feasts to cooking demonstrations, the month is a time for Canadians to learn, share, and connect through the flavours and traditions that shape Muslim life in Canada.

Traditional Islamic foods must adhere to halal dietary laws, which prohibit pork and alcohol, and cuisine centers fresh ingredients such as dates, olives, honey, grains, and lamb/chicken, often seasoned with cardamom, mint, and sumac. Popular dishes include biryani, hummus, kebabs, falafel, tajine, and sweets like baklava and mamool.



German Heritage Month

October is also German Heritage Month in Canada, celebrating the German culture and traditions as well as the German diaspora. The month is a time to learn about German traditions, language, arts, and community life, and celebrates the heritage that German Canadians bring to the multicultural landscape in Canada.

German cuisine is an important part of the heritage, with foods such as sausages (bratwurst), schnitzel, pretzels, sauerkraut, breads, and traditional desserts like strudel or Black Forest cake.



October in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

PEKELANEW – The Moon That Turns the Leaves White (October)

The PEKELANEW moon marks the first frost (turning white season). During this time, the earth begins to cool down and deer hunting is popular, deer are in rutting season and are not as cautious as usual so they could be easily fooled by hunters.

Under this moon, the WSÁNEĆ would begin splitting the cedar logs that had been felled in the Spring, ready to build canoes, which is considered Winter work. As well as deer, seals and sea lions would be hunted during this season, particularly in the San Juan Islands, whilst cod fishing tapered off.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



October Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Dussehra (October 2nd, 2026)

Overview: Celebrated across India and globally, Dussehra, or Vijayadashami, marks the victory of good over evil, commemorating Lord Rama's triumph over Ravana and Goddess Durga's victory over Mahishasura.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is important to this celebration and associated community gatherings. Families prepare festive meals and sweets to mark the occasion, often sharing dishes with neighbours and loved ones. Feasting follows rituals, performances like Ramlila, and communal events.

Food, Culture & Justice: Dussehra food traditions vary widely across regions and diaspora communities, reflecting India's diverse food cultures. Ingredients for sweets or traditional dishes may be adapted based on local availability. As with many festivals, commercialization can sometimes simplify or generalize cultural practices, overlooking regional and religious diversity.



Feature Dishes

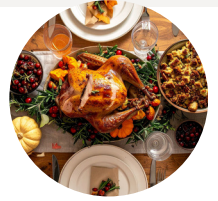
- Ladoos
- Jalebi
- Kheer or samosas

Canadian Thanksgiving (October 12th, 2026)

Overview: Canadian Thanksgiving falls on the second Monday in October. Canadian Thanksgiving is a harvest celebration giving thanks for the past year's abundance. It reflects both Indigenous harvest traditions and European settler influences, and is closely tied to seasonal change and local food.

Cultural & Food Practices: Large meals are commonly shared bringing family and friends together. Dishes highlight seasonal harvest ingredients, and meals are typically prepared collaboratively within households.

Food, Culture & Justice: Thanksgiving narratives often centre settler traditions while overlooking Indigenous food systems and histories. There is growing awareness of Indigenous perspectives and the importance of acknowledging land, harvest practices, and food sovereignty. Access to local, seasonal foods can also vary, shaping how people participate in harvest-based traditions.



Feature Dishes

- Roast turkey
- Stuffing and potatoes
- Pumpkin pie

Halloween (October 31st, 2026)

Overview: Halloween has roots in the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when the boundary between the living and the dead was believed to be thin. Today it is a largely secular celebration focused on creativity, community, and seasonal fun.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is tied to sharing and festivity. Candy and treats are central through trick-or-treating, while seasonal baking and pumpkin-based foods are common in homes and gatherings.



Feature Dishes

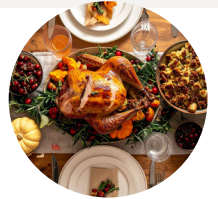
- Candy & chocolate
- Pumpkin pie & pumpkin baked goods
- Caramel apples

Samhain (October 31st, 2026)

Overview: Samhain marks the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter, a liminal time associated with honouring ancestors and transition into the darker half of the year.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is central through feasting and offerings. Seasonal foods are shared around communal fires, and offerings are left for spirits or ancestors, sometimes with an extra place set at the table. Meals reflect both harvest abundance and remembrance.

Food, Culture & Justice: Samhain traditions have evolved through time and diaspora, influencing modern Halloween practices. Many original meanings tied to land, seasonality, and ancestral connection have been diluted through commercialization. Reviving seasonal, local foods can reconnect the celebration to its agricultural and cultural roots.



Feature Dishes

- Root vegetable dishes
- Apple-based foods
- Grains and roasted meats

November

November at a Glance

Heritage Month(s): Hindu Heritage Month, Lebanese Heritage Month

November the W̱SÁNEĆ Calendar: WESELÁNEW - Moon of the Shaker Leaves, SJELCASEN - The Moon of Putting your Paddle away in the Bush

Key Celebrations: Samhain, Día de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead), Guru Nanak Jayanti, Dev Diwali/ Dev Deepavali

November Heritage Months

Hindu Heritage Month

November is also recognized as Hindu Heritage Month in Canada, a month to learn about and celebrate Hindu communities, cultures, and traditions. Hindu culture is one of the world's oldest, encompassing diverse languages, philosophies, and practices that emphasize balance, compassion, and connection to the natural world.

Family and community are central, and festivals such as Diwali and Dev Diwali highlight values of light, learning, and gratitude. Food plays a meaningful role, with vegetarian dishes, sweets, and offerings (prasad) shared in celebration and devotion.



Lebanese Heritage Month

November is also recognized as Lebanese Heritage Month in Canada. Lebanese culture reflects a unique blend of Arab, Mediterranean, and European influences, shaped by its diverse religious heritage and long history. Family and community are central, as well as a vibrant, Mediterranean-inspired cuisine. Arabic, French, and English are commonly spoken. Lebanese cuisine is known for its freshness, balance, and rich Mediterranean flavours. Traditional dishes include hummus, tabbouleh, baba ghanoush, kibbeh, and falafel, often served with warm pita and fresh herbs. Meals typically feature shared plates, grilled meats, olive oil, lemon, and aromatic spices, reflecting a culture of hospitality and gathering. Popular desserts like baklava and ma'amoul showcase the use of nuts, honey, and dates.



November in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

WESELÁNEW – Moon of the Shaker Leaves (November)

For the Saanich Peoples, November marks a month of falling leaves, turbulent waters and the skies and a cooling of the earth. In the WESELÁNEW moon, fishing was undertaken mostly in the safety of local waters. This was the time when big winds come and changed the season to Winter.

The days became cooler and travelling in food gathering territory was limited. The winds that came with this moon were a signal to move to the winter village as the open sea became dangerous for movement in open boats. Most foods were now in storage for the Winter and fishing was done only close to the village sites. The Saanich Peoples formed hunting parties and moved West into the mountains to hunt elk. Elk were only hunted after the first snowfall as it was easier to track an elk if it was wounded. This way no meat would be wasted. Winter fires were lit and this was the beginning of Winter gatherings.

Source: *13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ (Garry Fletcher)*



WESELÁNEW – Moon of the Shaker Leaves, SJELCASEN – The Moon of Putting your Paddle away in the Bush (November)

This is the season of strong, unpredictable winds when travel on the open sea becomes unsafe and the big canoes and paddles are put away in gratitude for their service through the year's journeys. As snow becomes possible, communities settle into winter life — gathering in longhouses for storytelling and ceremonies.

With most food stored, people turn to weaving mats, clothing, and baskets, repairing tools and fishing gear, and splitting red cedar logs (S,ILETEW) into planks for building. The low winter tides allow for clam digging, while the powerful SKANET (southeast) and SCES (southwest) winds mark the true arrival of winter.

Source: *13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ (Garry Fletcher)*



November Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Día de Los Muertos (November 2nd, 2026)

Overview: Día de los Muertos honours loved ones who have passed, blending Indigenous traditions and Catholic influences. It is a joyful remembrance that celebrates ongoing connection between the living and the dead.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is central through ofrendas (altars), where favourite dishes of the deceased are prepared and offered. Meals are shared with family and symbolically with ancestors, reflecting care, memory, and continuity. Visits to cemeteries and communal gatherings reinforce these connections.

Food, Culture & Justice: Día de los Muertos food traditions reflect Indigenous knowledge and have been shaped by colonization and cultural blending. In diaspora contexts, ingredients and practices are often adapted based on availability. The celebration is sometimes commercialized or misunderstood, which can overlook its deep cultural and spiritual significance.



Feature Dishes

- Pan de muerto
- Tamales
- Atole

Diwali (November 8th, 2026)

Overview: October or November (Hindu lunar calendar), celebrated globally. Diwali, the Festival of Lights, marks the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is an important part of celebrations; with families preparing sweets and savoury dishes to share with relatives, friends, and neighbours. Meals are often homemade and exchanged as gifts, reinforcing generosity and togetherness alongside rituals like lighting diyas and prayers.

Food, Culture & Justice: Diwali food traditions vary widely across India and global diaspora communities, reflecting regional diversity and migration. Ingredients for sweets and festive cooking may be adapted based on local availability, especially in diaspora settings. The festival is sometimes commercialized in broader cultural contexts, which can flatten its religious and regional significance.



Feature Dishes

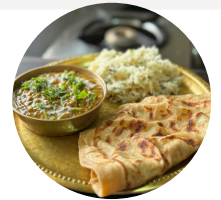
- Ladoos
- Barfi
- Jalebi

Guru Nanak Jayanti (November 24th, 2026)

Overview: Guru Nanak Jayanti celebrates the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism. It is a major festival centred on devotion, equality, and community.

Cultural & Food Practices: A key element is Langar, the free community kitchen where volunteers prepare and serve vegetarian meals to all, regardless of background. This practice reflects values of equality, service, and sharing. Food is prepared collectively and offered as an act of devotion and community care.

Food, Culture & Justice: Langar is a powerful model of food justice, emphasizing universal access to meals and dignity for all. Sikh food practices have spread globally through diaspora communities, adapting to local contexts. The focus on volunteering and shared labour highlights food as a tool for equity, inclusion, and collective care.



Feature Dishes

- Kada prasad
- Dal
- Roti

December

December at a Glance

December the WSÁNEĆ Calendar: SIS,ET – The Elder Moon

Key Celebrations: Bodhi Day, Dongzhi Festival, Yule, Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa

December in the WSÁNEĆ Calendar

SIS,ET - The Elder Moon (December)

This moon honours the Elders whose hair, or wisdom, shelters the community. Elders share teachings, stories, beliefs, and history with children gathered around the warmth of winter fires.

Though it aligns with December, SIS,ET is understood as the final moon in the yearly cycle, marked by the Winter Solstice when the earth is farthest from the sun. With short days and frequent storms making sea travel unsafe, families spent more time indoors. Winter sloughs around Saanich filled with ducks and geese, providing important food sources. People prepared for the seasons ahead: gathering wood pitch for torches, harvesting shellfish during night tides, finishing roughed-out canoes in the longhouse, and twisting earlier-harvested nettles into twine for nets and ropes.

SIS,ET is also the most important time for cultural and spiritual practices. The community gathered in the longhouse for winter ceremonies, where new dancers were initiated and stories were told to guide young people in the right way to live. This moon is a time of reflection, learning, and honouring the Elders who hold and pass on WSÁNEĆ knowledge.

Source: [13 Moons of the WSÁNEĆ \(Garry Fletcher\)](#)



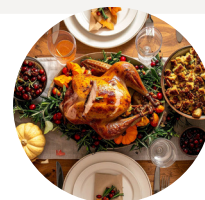
December Holidays, Celebrations & Observances

Bodhi Day (8th December, 2026)

Overview: Bodhi Day commemorates Siddhartha Gautama's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, marking the origin of Buddhism. It emphasizes reflection, mindfulness, and spiritual awakening.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food reflects simplicity and mindfulness. Many observe with vegetarian meals, prepared with intention and eaten quietly or in community. Foods like rice and milk reference the nourishment that sustained Siddhartha before enlightenment, linking food to spiritual practice.

Food, Culture & Justice: Bodhi Day practices vary across Buddhist communities and regions, often shaped by local food systems and availability. The emphasis on simple, plant-based eating highlights sustainability and non-harming. In diaspora contexts, meals may adapt while maintaining the core values of mindfulness and moderation.



Feature Dishes

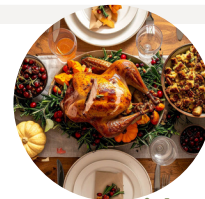
- Roast turkey
- Stuffing and potatoes
- Pumpkin pie

Dongzhi Festival (December 8th, 2026)

Overview: Dongzhi marks the winter solstice and the balance of yin and yang, as days begin to lengthen.

Cultural & Food Practices: Meals are shared communally, often after visiting or honouring ancestors. Dishes emphasize warmth, nourishment, and togetherness during the coldest part of the year, with a focus on seasonal comfort foods.

Food, Culture & Justice: Dongzhi food traditions vary across Chinese, Korean, and Japanese communities, reflecting regional climate and culinary history. Ingredients like glutinous rice may be less common or more expensive in some regions, leading to adaptations in diaspora contexts. The emphasis on shared food reinforces values of family continuity and collective care during seasonal hardship.



Feature Dishes

- Tangyuan (rice balls)
- Dumplings
- Warm soups

Yule (December 8th, 2026)

Overview: Yule marks the return of light as days begin to lengthen, symbolizing and seasonal transition out of the darkest part of the year.

Cultural & Food Practices: Meals are shared to mark abundance and resilience through winter, often alongside rituals like burning the Yule log and decorating with evergreens. Feasting, music, and gift-giving are all part of this celebration.

Feature Dishes Roasted meats, Root vegetables, Mulled cider



Christmas (December 25th, 2026)

Overview: Christian tradition and widely celebrated cultural holiday. Christmas commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ and has evolved into a global celebration of family, generosity, and winter festivity.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is central to gatherings and shared meals, often focused on family feasts and seasonal baking. Traditions vary widely by culture, with church services, gift-giving, and communal celebrations shaping how food is prepared and shared during the holiday period.

Feature Dishes Roast turkey or ham, Gingerbread cookies, Fruitcake or mince pies



Hanukkah (4th - 12th December, 2026)

Overview: Hanukkah, or the Festival of Lights, commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem and the miracle of oil lasting eight days. It is a celebration of resilience, faith, and light.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is deeply tied to the miracle of oil and is traditionally prepared by frying. Families light the menorah, gather for prayers, exchange gifts, and play dreidel games. Meals are often shared in family settings, emphasizing warmth, celebration, and cultural continuity.

Food, Culture & Justice: Hanukkah food traditions vary across Ashkenazi, Sephardi, and Mizrahi Jewish communities, reflecting regional histories and diaspora migration. Ingredients like oil-based fried foods are widely accessible, but specific cultural versions of dishes may be adapted based on local availability. The festival is sometimes commercially simplified in broader cultural settings, which can obscure its religious and historical meaning.



Feature Dishes

- Latkes
- Sufganiyot
- Dairy dishes such as cheesecake or blintzes

Kwanzaa (December 26th - January 1st, 2026)

Overview: Kwanzaa was created in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga to celebrate African heritage, identity, and community values. It is grounded in the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles) and culminates in a communal feast called Karamu.

Cultural & Food Practices: Food is particularly important to Karamu, the celebratory feast typically held on the sixth day. Meals emphasize communal sharing, cultural reflection, and connection to African heritage. Families gather to cook, share stories, light the kinara, and engage in music and cultural expression that reinforce the holiday's principles.

Food, Culture & Justice: Kwanzaa food traditions draw from the African diaspora, shaped by histories of enslavement, migration, and cultural preservation. Dishes often reflect ingredients that were historically accessible to African American communities and have since become symbols of resilience and heritage. The holiday also emphasizes reclaiming cultural identity through food in response to systemic marginalization and cultural erasure.



Feature Dishes

- Collard greens
- Black-eyed peas
- Fried plantains or sweet potatoes