

# Cultural Celebrations: *July*

## What's on in July?

July is full of vibrant cultural and religious celebrations that honour food, harvests, and community. From the First Salmon Ceremonies on the West Coast, which mark the return of the salmon and give thanks for this vital food source, to Buddhist festivals like Asalha Puja that include shared meals and offerings, food plays a central role in bringing people together.

## Cultural Celebrations

- First Salmon Ceremonies
- July 6th – Ashura
- July 10th – Asalha Puja (Dhamma Day)

## International Days / Month:

- July 18th – Nelson Mandela International Day
- All of July – Disability Pride Month

## Ashura *July 6th – 7th*

Ashura, observed on the 10th day of Muharram in the Islamic calendar, is a significant day of remembrance and reflection for Muslims around the world. For Sunni Muslims, it commemorates the day Prophet Moses and the Israelites were saved from Pharaoh, often marked by fasting. For Shia Muslims, Ashura honours the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala. It is a day of mourning and spiritual reflection, often observed through prayers, community gatherings, and public processions that reflect on themes of justice, sacrifice, and resilience.

While not a festive occasion, food plays an important role, especially among Shia Muslims, as part of communal mourning and acts of service. In Shia traditions, free meals are often distributed as an expression of charity and solidarity, with common dishes including haleem—a savory porridge made of wheat, meat, and lentils—and ashure or Noah's pudding, a sweet dish of grains, dried fruits, and nuts popular in Turkish and Balkan cultures. Simple vegetarian meals are also shared in remembrance. In Canada, Ashura is marked in diverse Muslim communities, including Khoja, Iraqi, Iranian, and Afghan congregations, with gatherings held at mosques and community centres. Public processions and educational events are also held in cities such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Edmonton, offering moments of reflection on themes of justice, sacrifice, and collective care.

Haleem



Noah's Pudding



## Resources & Recipes:

[About Ashura](#)

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## First Salmon Ceremonies *Various WSÁNEĆ and Coast Salish Nations* *Early - Mid July*



Salmonberry

These sacred community events celebrate the return of the salmon. Hosted by Nations such as Tsartlip, Tsawout, and T'Sou-ke, they involve traditional protocols, feasting, and intergenerational teachings around food sovereignty and respect for land and water.

### Key Highlights from Tsawout's First Salmon Ceremony

#### First Salmon Ceremony & Reef Net Canoe Blessing

Tsawout's fisheries team, led by elder Troy Olsen, performed the sacred First Salmon Ceremony. This tradition honours returning salmon as spiritual relatives and reinforces the community's reciprocal relationship with the sea.

#### Native Plant ID Walks

Community members guided participants through local plant life, focusing on traditional uses and the deep cultural importance of native species.

#### Drum-Making Demonstration

Sharing of ancestral craft practices, inviting attendees to learn about drum-making as both cultural expression and ceremony.

#### Communal Meal

Light lunch and snacks provided by Tsawout offered a communal space to connect — featuring traditional ingredients and foods



Salmon

### Importance of First Salmon Ceremonies

The First Salmon Ceremony is a living example of food sovereignty in action—centering ceremony, respect, and gratitude before the harvest. It reminds participants that healthy ecosystems and living Indigenous cultures go hand in hand. Incorporating language (SENĆOTEN place names), plant knowledge, and traditional craft, the event wove together multiple strands of cultural continuity and revitalization.

STÁUTW First Nation is one of five WSÁNEĆ communities, working to strengthen language, food systems, and traditional knowledge. Among many community initiatives, they're also engaged in language revitalization programs and local economic development.

### Resources:

[About the First Salmon Ceremony](#)

[About the First Salmon Ceremony](#)



## Asalha Puja *July 10th*

Asalha Puja, also known as Dhamma Day, is one of the most sacred days in the Theravāda Buddhist calendar. It commemorates the Buddha's first teaching after his enlightenment—the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, or "Turning the Wheel of the Dhamma"—which laid the foundation for the core teachings of Buddhism.

Observed in countries such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos, and by diaspora communities across Canada, Asalha Puja is a time of renewal, gratitude, and spiritual generosity. Food plays an essential role in the day's rituals, particularly through the practice of dāna, or offering. Lay people visit temples early in the morning to offer alms to monks, which typically include lovingly prepared dishes such as fragrant rice, vegetable curries, stews, fruits, and regional desserts.

Many Buddhists choose to eat vegetarian or simple meals on this day as a way of practicing mindfulness and non-harming (ahimsa). Traditional dishes may include coconut milk curries, sweet sticky rice with mango, mung bean desserts, or banana leaf-wrapped rice treats like khao tom. These meals are often shared in large community settings after the offerings have been made and the monks have led chanting and delivered Dhamma talks.

In Canadian cities with strong Buddhist communities—such as Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, and Victoria—temples host Asalha Puja observances that include food offerings, teachings, meditation, and potluck-style community meals. These events not only offer nourishment for the body, but also serve as a way to strengthen community bonds and practice key Buddhist values of generosity, humility, and interconnectedness.

### Resources:

 [Asalha Puja](#)

**Khao Tom**



**Mango Sticky Rice**

