



Wellbeing Insights

Living a Better, More Vibrant Life



Celebrating Black History Month

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans and a time for recognizing the significant role of African Americans in shaping U.S. (and global) history.

The celebration of Black History Month began as “Negro History Week,” which was created in 1926 by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-trained historian. Dr. Woodson is also known as the father of Black history. He strongly believed that African Americans should be proud of their heritage and that other Americans should understand it.

Negro History Week eventually became a month-long celebration, and President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976. He said the country

needed to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

Black History Month is recognized during the month of February because it coincides with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Both of these men played a significant role in helping end slavery in America.

One of America’s greatest strengths is its rich diversity. During the month of February, we all should take a moment to reflect upon the achievements and sacrifices of the African American community. Most of us are aware of well-known African Americans like Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks,

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Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey. The following are a few lesser known African Americans and their contributions to the world:

Granville T. Woods – Woods accumulated nearly 60 patents during his lifetime (1856-1910), many of which improved the functioning of railroads. His most notable inventions are the induction telegraph system, which allowed traveling trains to communicate with one another while also allowing dispatchers to locate them, and the first electricity-powered railway.

George Washington Carver – Carver is famous for giving us peanut butter . . . and much more! He was an agricultural chemist and in an effort to increase the profitability of sweet potatoes and peanuts, Carver began conducting experiments in 1896. He created 518 new products from these crops, including ink, dye, soap, cosmetics, flour, vinegar and synthetic rubber.

Madam C.J. Walker – Madam C.J. Walker was the first African American woman to become a self-made millionaire after creating a line of hair products for Black hair. There's a series on Netflix about her life called "[Self Made.](#)" Check it out!

Marie Van Brittan Brown – Brown filed a patent in 1966 for the first-ever home security system. Her original design contained a camera, two-way microphone, peepholes and monitors – all serving as the foundations for today's modern system.

Shirley Jackson – Jackson, the first African American woman to earn a doctorate at MIT, is responsible for telecommunications research that led to the invention of products such as the touch-tone phone, portable fax, fiber optic cables and caller ID.

Mark Dean – Dean is a co-inventor of IBM's original personal computer, and the PC color monitor, changing how we interact with the internet. He also invented the technology that enables printers, keyboards and mice to communicate with your computer.

Garrett Morgan – Morgan is known as the inventor of the traffic signal. His invention was the first to offer a third "caution" signal, which we now know as the yellow light. And in 1912, Morgan received a patent for his "Breathing Device," which was one of the earliest versions of a gas mask.

African Americans have made significant contributions to the world we live in, which went unrecognized for many years. Black History Month provides us all with the opportunity to pause, learn, celebrate and commemorate these achievements. Recognizing this month reminds us that Black history is everyone's history.

10 Ways to Celebrate Black History Month



1. Enjoy poetry by an African American poet such as Langston Hughes or Phyllis Wheatley, the first African American poet and the first woman to publish a book, respectively.

2. Explore Black music. Groove to some soulful jazz or blues by the likes of Miles Davis or Etta James, or explore the history of Hip Hop.

3. Support Black-owned businesses – even better if they're local businesses!

4. Watch movies about Black history and culture or by Black film makers.

5. Take virtual tours of the Civil Rights Museums or the [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#).

6. Celebrate Black history through food by cooking a meal or recipe by a Black chef or cook.

7. Donate to a Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

8. Read Dr. King's "[I Have a Dream](#)" speech.

9. Extend the celebration beyond February by creating a safe space for dialogue and discussing topics such as racism and other experiences that members of the Black community may face.

10. Strengthen your allyship. While you're doing your research and reading up on Black history, identify intentional ways you can fight injustice each day.

[loc.gov](#) (Library of Congress), [history.com](#), [naacp.org](#), [africanamericanhistorymonth.gov](#)



On the Menu

Wild Blueberries

Blueberries have long been touted as a superfood due to their high antioxidant content. According to the Environmental Working Group, consumers should select organic over conventionally grown blueberries, when possible, to avoid lingering pesticides on the skin. However, there is another classification of blueberries that’s been storming the produce department and is thought to reign supreme – wild blueberries.

Up until 1911, all blueberries were considered wild. Then, a New Jersey farmer wanted to domesticate the blueberry and create a new breed that could be easily planted and harvested and contain only what he felt were the best attributes of the wild berry. He selected the larger berries, which is one of the biggest differences between cultivated and wild blueberries. The cultivated berry contains much more water than the wild berry; this extra water accounts for the shrinkage and “blue holes” when one bakes with cultivated berries. Currently, cultivated blueberries are grown all around the world, but the wild blueberry is only grown commercially in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Maine.

Nutritionally, there is a big difference between the wild and cultivated varieties. Wild blueberries have twice the antioxidants of cultivated blueberries due to a higher concentration of the flavonoid anthocyanin. However, this is not based on a berry-to-berry comparison; it’s based on a cup-to-cup comparison. Anthocyanin is located in the skin of the berry. Since it takes twice the amount of the much smaller wild blueberries to fill a cup, there is twice the amount of blueberry skin and thus twice the amount of antioxidants. Additionally, wild blueberries contain 30% less (natural) sugar than cultivated varieties, with just 10 grams per one-cup serving, and 25% of the recommended daily allowance of fiber (6.2g per cup), which is 72% more than cultivated blueberries.

Both wild and cultivated varieties may improve brain, gut and heart health, aid in cancer prevention, reduce the risk of diabetes, and promote urinary tract health. Several studies also indicate that regular consumption of this fruit is associated with slower cognitive decline and may boost memory.

Keep It Fresh

99% of the annual wild blueberry harvest is quick frozen within 24 hours of harvest and 1% is sold fresh. For this reason, most wild blueberries can be found in the freezer section of your grocery store. Typically, they can be stored for about 12 months in the freezer. To thaw, place them in the refrigerator overnight. Once thawed it’s best to consume, bake with or otherwise use them within two days. Defrosted berries will be more delicate than fresh berries; handle them gently to keep their shape.

Wild Blueberry Protein Powder Smoothie



Nutrition Info

Per serving (1 cup)

Calories	456
Total Fat	12.6g
Carbohydrates	46.1g
Fiber	9.4g
Sugar	28.2g
Protein	42.5g

Ingredients:

- 1 cup milk (can substitute with other milk varieties like almond, soy, coconut, oat, macadamia, cashew, etc.)
- ½ cup frozen wild blueberries
- ½ frozen banana
- 1 scoop vanilla protein powder
- 1 Tbsp. peanut butter (or other nut butter)
- 1 Tbsp. chia seeds
- Optional ingredients: ground flax seed, collagen powder, spinach, cinnamon, ice

Directions:

Add all ingredients to a blender and mix until smooth. Add ice as needed for desired thickness. Pour into glass and serve immediately.

Adapted from WildBlueberries.com

All About Adaptogens



With stress levels surging across the country, it's no surprise that many are looking at new methods to help manage stress. Things like meditation, exercise, therapy and breath work have all been popular methods to keep stress hormones at bay. Now, many people are looking to ancient Chinese and Ayurvedic practices (a holistic healing system developed more than 3,000 years ago in India) and consuming specific types of herbs and plants, also known as adaptogens, to help alleviate stress.

What are adaptogens?

Adaptogens are a variety of plants, including certain types of herbs, roots and mushrooms, that can reportedly help the body adapt to different kinds of stress, including physical, chemical and biological. These non-toxic plants have been used for centuries in ancient healing practices and are now getting increased attention in today's world.

Although many swear by these plants, typically consuming them in the form of supplements, brewed teas or tinctures (an extract of the plant dissolved in ethanol), keep in mind that the research on the impact of adaptogens

in humans is still somewhat limited. Further research is needed to validate these claims.

How do they work?

According to integrative medicine experts, adaptogens work by interacting with the body's hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (also known as HPA axis), as well as the sympathoadrenal system. Both of these systems are involved in managing the body's response to stress. Adaptogens may also have an impact on regulating hormones, the immune system and energy levels.

Types of Adaptogens

Adaptogens are found in many different forms. Some adaptogens, like holy basil, can be added directly to meals, while others can be added in the form of tinctures or powders to beverages, soups and sauces, or consumed in pill form. Each adaptogen is known for hosting its own benefits, and several may work synergistically to provide beneficial outcomes when consumed in combination. For example, some clinical studies have found that blending the adaptogens *Rhodiola rosea*, *Schisandra chinensis* and *Eleutherococcus senticosus* helped improve cognitive

function in vitro when the brain was exposed to certain stressors, such as exercise or cognitive challenges.

Each adaptogen is responsible for different regulations within the body's stress response to help maintain homeostasis. The best adaptogen for you is dependent on what you personally need support with. The chart on the next page lists the most widely used adaptogens and their purported health benefits.

Safety Considerations

Although you might be able to find some of these adaptogens in their pure, fresh or dried forms, most of them are found as supplements in pill form, tinctures or powders in health food stores. It's important to do your research before taking any supplements as the ingredients are not heavily regulated and can vary in effectiveness. In some cases supplements can interact with each other or with medications, so always consult your physician before adding any new supplements to your regimen, especially if you are taking medications, managing a chronic condition, or are breastfeeding or pregnant.

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Adaptogen	What is it?	Best for
Ashwagandha	A small evergreen shrub that grows in India, the Middle East and part of Africa. The root and berry have been used for over 3,000 years in Ayurvedic medicine.	Soothing stress and hormonal imbalances
Cordyceps	A fungus that naturally lives in the high mountain regions of China. Most supplements are made from cordyceps grown in a laboratory.	Increasing energy and supporting the immune system
Holy Basil	A plant that originates from India but now grows in Australia, West Africa and some parts of the Middle East. It is also known as tulsi. The leaves, stems and seeds are used to make medicine.	Decreasing inflammation and promoting homeostasis and adaption to stress
Turmeric	A root that is part of the ginger family. It has a warm, bitter taste and is commonly found in Asian foods. Turmeric contains a chemical compound called curcumin that may have adaptogenic properties that manage the production of the stress hormone cortisol. The root can be used alone or is commonly consumed with black pepper, which is known to increase the body's absorption of curcumin.	Reducing pain and inflammation; may be able to inhibit large increases in stress hormone production
Panax Ginseng	A plant that grows in Korea, northeastern China and far eastern Siberia. Panax ginseng should not be confused with other ginseng plants, such as American ginseng, Siberian ginseng or Panax pseudoginseng, which have different chemical compounds.	Regaining homeostasis after persistent stress, as well as alleviating chronic inflammation
Maca	A root vegetable grown in the Andes region. It has a malty flavor, making it easy to add to beverages like coffee, teas and shakes.	Increasing energy levels and boosting libido
Rhodiola	A plant whose root has a long history of use as medicine, particularly in the Arctic and Northern European regions.	Reducing stress hormone production by helping to mediate the fight-or-flight stress response
Reishi	A fungus (mushroom) that has a woody texture and bitter taste	Supporting the immune system

DIY Adaptogenic Hot Cocoa

Ingredients:

- 10 oz. hot water (or sub your favorite milk)
- 1 Tbsp. unsweetened cacao powder
- 1 tsp. Reishi mushroom powder
- 1 tsp. Maca powder
- 1 tsp. coconut butter (can be eliminated if using milk instead of water)
- ½ tsp. Ashwagandha powder
- ⅓ tsp. cinnamon
- Sweetener of choice (to taste)

Directions:

Add all ingredients to a high-speed blender. Blend on high until creamy and frothy, about 1 minute. Taste and adjust flavor as necessary. Adaptogens can be slightly bitter, so adding more coconut butter, cacao or sweetener will help offset any bitter taste. Serve immediately.



Extending Kindness to Brighten Your World

This year, Random Acts of Kindness Week is February 14-20. While this is a great time to strengthen your ability to extend kindness, it's beneficial to take these practices far beyond. We've all been experiencing a range of emotions and challenges due to the pandemic, a divisive election, and other personal and societal issues. Extending kindness to others is an effective tool for coping with these stressors.

When you give and receive kindness your brain produces oxytocin which helps lower your blood pressure and increase self-esteem, optimism, energy levels and overall happiness. Kindness also has healing powers by stimulating the production of serotonin. This 'feel-good' chemical helps decrease anxiety, pain and stress.

Here are a few simple ideas for extending kindness that will benefit you and the recipient:

Offer an uplifting comment on a social media post. Try comments that speak to a person's character, such as "your smile can always brighten my day" or "I'm inspired by the support you show for this cause."

Add an inspiring quote to your signature line. If you have a quote that truly resonates with you in a positive way, share it! People read these more often than you might think, and it just may make their day.



Do the best you can until you
know better. Then,
**when you know better,
do better.**

- MAYA ANGELOU



Create a group connection. A random group text or Snapchat to your best friends or family members that lets them know you're thinking of them will provide a little validation that they're valued. It's much more personal (and less annoying to others) than a Facebook shout-out.

Offer your endorsement. Whether it's a positive review of a craftsperson on Etsy, a Google review of a great health care provider, promotion of a local charity or simply a LinkedIn endorsement of a coworker's skills, these positive messages go a long way to sustain the good work others are doing.

Send a card. As face time with our loved ones continues to be somewhat limited, getting an unexpected surprise in the mail can really brighten a day. You could include a picture, recipe, quote, doodle or even a little confetti for fun.

Be neighborly. Share a baked good (or perhaps some fresh produce) with your neighbor, or leave them a flower and kind note by their front door. If you have an elderly neighbor or someone who lives alone, offer to pick up groceries or share a meal. Or, engage in the simplest act of all - greet a neighbor with a smile and ask them how they're doing.

Donate. Most of us have something to offer. Whether it's clothing, food, blood, time to volunteer or talent to entertain, look for opportunities to give.



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