



BELONGING

The Power of WE

Poem by Anonymous

Celebrate We

There would be no we
 If there were no you, and no me
 There would be no us
 If we came together, but could not agree
 You getting your way
 And I getting mine
 Would only leave a trail of destruction behind
 It serves no purpose, it sees no end
 But leaves lives broken, and much more difficult to mend
 Imagine a world without a we
 All that is left is silly old me
 Certainly not much fun would that be
 Alone on an island, without any glee
 And if I were found, I'd be talking to a tree
 Oh the madness
 The absurdity of that
 When clearly it stands to reason
 That we is bigger than you and better than me
 The more of we there is
 The brighter the world becomes
 We will be one voice and I is reduced to none
 So let us come together
 Yes! You and Me
 Let us celebrate our cultural diversity
 It is our differences that sets us apart
 A cause to rejoice and share love from the heart
 I could never be you
 And you could never be me
 Check out your fingerprint
 For this guarantee
 But by learning, respecting and loving each other
 You and I together make
 WE!



In this issue:

National Mentoring Month, Poverty in America Awareness Month, Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month; New Year's Day, Epiphany, World Braille Day, Martin Luther King Jr Day, International Day of Education, International Holocaust Remembrance Day



New Year's Day

According to the Gregorian calendar, New Year's Day falls on January 1 and marks the end of New Year's Eve celebrations in the United States and gives many Americans a chance to remember the previous year.



New Year's Day, starts at midnight, with fireworks, parties and special events. For many it is a day of recovery from the New Year's Eve celebrations of the previous night. In some towns and cities, parades are held, and special football games are played. and special football games are played.

The birth of the first baby in the New Year is often celebrated with gifts to his or her parents and appearances in local newspapers and on local news shows. Many people make New Year's resolutions. These are usually promises to themselves that they will improve something in their own lives. Common New Year's resolutions are to stop smoking or drinking alcohol, to lose weight, exercise more or to live a healthier lifestyle.



Many ways to say New Year's

English	New Year's Day
Arabic	رأس السنة الميلادية
German	Neujahrstag
Hebrew	יום השנה החדשה
Korean	설날
Norwegian	Første nyttårsdag, Nyttår
Spanish	Día de Año Nuevo

Symbols of New Year:

A common symbol is the Baby New Year, who is often depicted as a white male baby dressed in a diaper, a hat, and a sash. The year he represents printed on his sash. According to mythology baby New Year ages to an old man, Father Time, by the end of one year and hands his role over to the next Baby New Year. Other symbols recently incorporated in New Year include fireworks, and the Time Square crystal ball.



Epiphany

WHAT IS EPIPHANY: Epiphany, celebrated on January 6, marks the final day of the Christian holiday season and commemorates the arrival of the Three Wise Men. It is commonly associated with the day the Three Wise Men arrived at the manger and has several different names throughout history and cultures. Also known as 'Old Christmas', it is often recognized as the 12th day of Christmas and concludes the twelve days of Christmastide ending the Christian Christmas season. (Sources: <https://nationaltoday.com>)



The many names of Epiphany:

- *Three Kings Day*
- *Little Christmas*
- *The Feast of the Epiphany*
- *Women's Christmas*

- * La Bafana*
- * Timket*



WHY OLD CHRISTMAS: Centuries ago, Christmas was celebrated on January 6. However, in 1582, the Julian calendar (which was based on phases of the moon) was discarded in favor of the modern Gregorian calendar, which celebrated Christmas Day began December 25. Many cultures have developed their own names and traditions to celebrate this day. For example, in Scandinavia, they celebrate what they call Little Christmas Eve on December 23. (Source: <https://www.bestofamishcountry.com>)

WHY TWELVE DAYS: The 12 days is a symbolic representation of the amount of time it took the Three Wise Men to travel to Bethlehem to recognize Jesus as the son of God

WAYS TO CELEBRATE:

- *In Spain, and many Spanish and Latin cultures, children traditionally did not receive their presents on Christmas Day but instead on January 6, in commemoration of the day the Wise Men arriving in Bethlehem bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- *In Ireland, they also call Little Christmas Women's Christmas, because Irish men take on the household duties for the day. Other popular traditions include singing, chalking the door, having one's house blessed, eating a three kings cake, going to church, and winter swimming.
- *Take down Christmas decorations. It is also customary for many Christians to remove their Christmas decorations on Epiphany Eve, although other Christian countries historically remove them on Candlemas. According to the first tradition, those who fail to remember to remove their Christmas decorations on Epiphany Eve must leave them untouched until Candlemas. (Sources: <https://nationaltoday.com>)



WORLD

Braille DAY



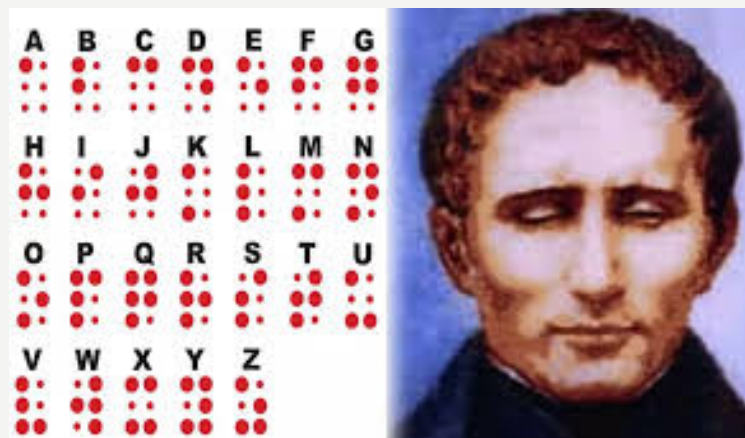
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES—ONE BILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE— ARE LESS LIKELY TO ACCESS HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COMMUNITY. THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO LIVE IN POVERTY, EXPERIENCE HIGHER RATES OF VIOLENCE, NEGLECT AND ABUSE, AND ARE AMONG THE MOST MARGINALIZED IN ANY VULNERABLE COMMUNITY.

FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED, LIFE UNDER COVID LOCKDOWN HAS POSED SEVERAL ISSUES IN TERMS OF INDEPENDENCE AND ISOLATION, ESPECIALLY FOR PEOPLE WHO RELY ON THE USE OF TOUCH TO COMMUNICATE THEIR NEEDS AND ACCESS INFORMATION. THE PANDEMIC HAS REVEALED HOW CRITICALLY IMPORTANT IT IS TO PRODUCE ESSENTIAL INFORMATION IN ACCESSIBLE FORMATS, INCLUDING IN BRAILLE AND AUDIBLE FORMATS. OTHERWISE, MANY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES COULD FACE A HIGHER RISK OF CONTAMINATION DUE TO A LACK OF ACCESS OF GUIDELINES AND PRECAUTIONS IN BRAILLE.

WHAT IS BRAILLE?

BRAILLE IS A TACTILE REPRESENTATION OF ALPHABETIC AND NUMERICAL SYMBOLS USING SIX DOTS TO REPRESENT EACH LETTER AND NUMBER, AND EVEN MUSICAL, MATHEMATICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SYMBOLS. BRAILLE (NAMED AFTER ITS INVENTOR IN 19TH CENTURY FRANCE, LOUIS BRAILLE) IS USED BY BLIND AND PARTIALLY SIGHTED PEOPLE TO READ THE SAME BOOKS AND PERIODICALS AS THOSE PRINTED IN A VISUAL FONT.

BRAILLE IS ESSENTIAL IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION, FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OPINION, AS WELL AS SOCIAL INCLUSION, AS REFLECTED IN ARTICLE 2 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES. (SOURCE: WWW.UN.ORG)



MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY



Submitted by Natasha Cole, Self Advocate Coordinator

HOW TO CELEBRATE MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY 2024?

CELEBRATING MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY CAN BE DONE IN VARIOUS MEANINGFUL WAYS THAT HONOR DR. KING'S LEGACY AND PROMOTE HIS IDEALS. HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO CELEBRATE:

- ATTEND COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS: MANY COMMUNITIES ORGANIZE PARADES, LECTURES, AND OTHER EVENTS THAT CELEBRATE DR. KING'S LIFE AND MESSAGE.
- ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE: PARTICIPATE IN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES OR SERVICE PROJECTS THAT BENEFIT YOUR COMMUNITY, ALIGNING WITH DR. KING'S COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE.
- EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES: LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT AND DR. KING'S WORK THROUGH BOOKS, DOCUMENTARIES, OR VISITS TO RELEVANT MUSEUMS AND HISTORICAL SITES.
- REFLECT ON SOCIAL JUSTICE: TAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS AND CONSIDER HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE JUST SOCIETY.
- SPREAD AWARENESS: SHARE DR. KING'S MESSAGES OF EQUALITY, LOVE, AND NONVIOLENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO INSPIRE OTHERS.

DDS THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

Submitted by West Region and Southbury Training School Cultural Committee



On behalf of The Brian O'Connell Homeless Project, the West Region collected necessities to fill "Brian's Bags" for the homeless in memory of Brian O'Connell.

- We were able to collect donations to fill approximately 78 bags!
- Donna Finneran, Founder of Bria's Bags, expressed her heartfelt gratitude and helped us fill "Brian's Bags" on December 14 in Cheshire.
- Donna distributed the bags in many surrounding towns and cities and shared many hope-filled stories of her mission!



Pictures of Brian's Bags contributed by Rhonda David-Copeland



Submitted by Lisa Fioravanti
From the website, International Day of Education | UNESCO

Education is a human right, a public good and a public responsibility.

UNESCO would like to dedicate this International Day to all the girls and women in Afghanistan, who have been denied their right to learn, study and teach. The Organization condemns this serious attack on human dignity and on the fundamental right to education.

The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed January 24 as International Day of Education, in celebration of the role of education for peace and development.

Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, countries will not succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty that is leaving millions of children, youth and adults behind.

Today, 250 million children and youth are out of school, and 763 million adults are illiterate. Their right to education is being violated and it is unacceptable. It's time to transform education.



timsimages.uk/Shutterstock.com



INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Seventy-eight years ago on Jan. 27, the Auschwitz concentration camp closed after liberation by the Soviet army. Established in 2005 by the UN General Assembly the world now comes together every year on the anniversary to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, which resulted in the systematic murder of approximately 6 million Jews and 5 million members of other minority groups, by Nazi Germany.

More than just a day of reflection and learning, it is a day to stand together against anti-Semitism, genocide and xenophobia – especially hate crimes we see appear in our own community. It is by speaking up and taking bold action against any threat to justice that we will ensure that the atrocities of the Holocaust never happen again. (Source: advetisthealthcare.com)

Experiences and trauma of Holocaust survivors are passed down through generations. It is carried on and experienced through succeeding generations: children, grandchildren and—recently, people are even suggesting great grandchildren. And that's worrisome because it challenges the idea that a conflict or genocide is ever truly resolved once it has ended. The memory and the effect of that violence doesn't just disappear. Intergenerational trauma is present across all families of genocide and conflict survivors.

I think what's important is that the Holocaust is recognized as an important episode of history to learn from, and that there is still so much we can learn from that period of time. If we don't remember and pay attention, we are at risk of recreating that kind of violence this century.

We also have to remember that the violence doesn't just end—it lives on emotionally within the psyche and consciousness of those who experienced these kinds of horrors. Because those memories live on in survivors, they become part of the culture of their families, the generations that come after them and their communities. So it is important that we recognize that, and sympathize and empathize not only with that first generation of sufferers but their children and grandchildren as well. (Source: www.colorado.edu)





January is also known as Human Trafficking Awareness Month. It is a key time for us all as individuals to educate ourselves about human trafficking and learn to spot the signs of trafficking. National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month, January 2024, culminates in the annual observation of National Freedom Day on February 1, 2024.

Did You Know?

- \$245 billion is made each year from human trafficking, that's over \$7,500 every second
- Women and girls make up 54% of all victims worldwide and are 78% of victims of forced commercial sexual exploitation.
- Many U.S. businesses have human trafficking in their supply chains without even knowing it.
- Victims are told that police are corrupt, and that seeking help leads to being deported.
- In 2021, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received 10,360 reports of suspected human trafficking cases, involving 16,710 victims.
- 1 in 6 endangered runaways reported are likely to be sex trafficking victims.

- The number of people who are in human trafficking or living in modern-day slavery is estimated at 49.6 million, including the 22 million in forced marriages. The remaining 27.6 million is made up of:
 - 19.9 million people in forced labor in private or state-run companies, or criminal exploitation
 - 1.4 million people experiencing domestic servitude in private homes
 - 6.3 million people in forced sexual exploitation (including 1.7 million children)

Estimates suggest the number of people living in conditions of modern slavery in the United States is up to 1,091,000. No-one knows exactly how many people are trafficked in or to the U.S. each year, because this is a hidden crime, but in 2021, the National Human Trafficking Hotline received 10,360 reports of suspected human trafficking cases, involving 16,710 victims. This is widely acknowledged to be the tip of the iceberg.[10] (Source: hopeforjustice.org)

To bring awareness to this issue, we are asking you to wear blue on Wednesday, January 11, National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Did you know that the U.S. ranks second highest in poverty rates among its peer countries? Poverty Awareness Month is about taking an opportunity to learn more about this social ill, raise awareness among others, and understand how everyone can help. (Source:nationaltoday.com)



Photo: CT Mirror

Today, poverty is a global problem, exists in pretty much every country, and is measured slightly differently depending on the nation (even as global bodies like the U.N. and the World Bank have created common definitions). (Source:nationaltoday.com)

Poverty came into global focus after the Second World War and measures have been taken on a world stage ever since. (Source:nationaltoday.com)



The U.S. poverty level is now \$13,590 for individuals and \$23,030 for a family of three. (Source: time.com)

The official criterion for assessing poverty in the U. S. was established in the 1960s and has stayed largely unchanged since then. Mollie Orshansky, an economist who worked as a statistician for the Social Security Administration, was the one who devised this metric. (Source:nationaltoday.com)

12.4% of Americans now live in poverty according to new 2022 data from the U.S. census, an increase from 7.4% in 2021. Child poverty also more than doubled last year to 12.4% from 5.2% the year before. (Source:census.org)

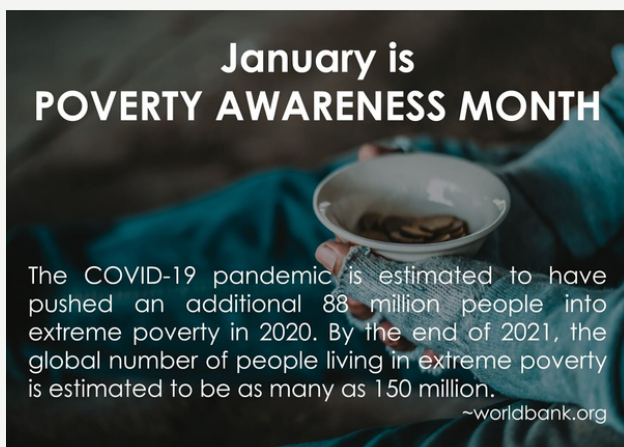


Image: Weingart Center

Slightly less than 150,000 Connecticut households in 2021 lived below the Federal Poverty Level, (Source: ctmirror.org)



No one succeeds alone

What Is National Mentoring Month?

National Mentoring Month is a month-long series of events designed to raise awareness of mentoring among young people and adults. Launched jointly in 2002 by the Harvard School of Public Health and MENTOR National, NMM is now celebrated by for-profit and non-profit organizations, governments, and individuals worldwide.

Anyone can be a mentor. National Mentoring Month is a celebration of the human need for mentoring and its importance to growth. (Source: mentorcliq.com)

Success comes with learning and what better way than with a mentor! Thanking your mentors might feel a little silly or embarrassing, but gratefulness goes a long way. The custom of mentoring is so traditional it even dates back before Greek mythology. In the book, “The Odyssey,” there is a character—called the mentor—whose sole purpose is to guide others in life. Mentoring does not only include professional development. You can also be mentored in beauty, life skills, craftsmanship and hobbies. January is best known for National Mentoring Month and giving your time back to those who help you. (Source:nationaltoday.com)

5 activities to do during National Mentoring Month

Educate and engage – raise awareness about the benefits of mentoring.

Celebrate existing mentorships – acknowledge and appreciate existing mentor-mentee pairs within the organization. Share their success stories to inspire others.

Introduce new programs –

Leverage tools and resources- introduce new information and ways to support or improve existing mentoring programs.

Collaborate – participate in events, learn from, best practices and strengthen your organization's mentorship efforts.

Drive action – encourage employees to take individual actions – whether it's seeking a mentor, offering mentorship, or simply sharing their mentoring stories. (Source: togetherplatform.com)

DDS Mentoring - Our Stories

Submitted by Lawrence Besra, DSW-1 and DDS-PASS Mentee 2023-2024, E-mail:
besralawrence75@gmail.com,

Importance of Disability-Inclusive Language

My current involvement with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) enriched my in-depth insights and demystified my understandings on diversity, inclusion and equity. Through this invaluable PASS Mentoring Program, I profoundly endeavored to connect and relate to my academic background and my previous working experiences in the non-profit and charity organizations that inspired me to contribute in a multifaceted health and human services like DDS.

In my understanding, the essence of an inclusive approach in policy encompasses the ideal perspective of including people from diverse backgrounds like, gender, language, physical and developmental ethnicity, religion and geographical location to eliminate widespread disparities, inequalities and exclusion of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The inclusive approach broadly urges to dismantle rhetorical structural and systemic barriers while paving the way to equitable access to social services with equal rights.

The Five Year Plan 2022-2027 of DDS is a strategic policy guiding document that integrated a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to correct systems inequities through engaging multiple stakeholders and enhancing the culture of pluralistic society that is safe, secured, inclusive and equitable for all (DDS Five Year Plan 2022-2027, p. 28). Remarkably, the State of Connecticut is above the national average in many community inclusion indicators like the quality of life of the individuals supported (DDS Five Year Plan 2022-2027, p. 10).

Being an employee of DDS (DSW-1) as a direct personal care and support personnel to people with multiple disabilities, I had the opportunity to read their background histories, individual support plan books, documents and relevant policies. Carefully reading those personal documents, I was critically thinking how those innocent individuals could be depicted in a better way. Luckily, I got the opportunity through this PASS Mentoring Program to invest my inquisitive interest and time to unfold some new windows of opportunities that might be beneficial for service providers. With the continuous support and guidance of my mentor-John Baker, I started researching online for disability friendly words and phrases and found substantially credible documents regarding the disability-inclusive language.

I do hereby acknowledge that I am neither an English language expert nor a linguist but a thoughtful reader of a wide range of literature pertaining to developmental disabilities. In my opinion, any words either spoken or written to describe individuals with disabilities do matter. Linguistics experts suggest that putting the person first, as in “people with disability,” is widely defined as people-first language that systematically tends to reduce the dehumanization of disability.

In my opinion, it is significantly important the usage of disability-inclusive language in portraying and treating people with intellectual disabilities with professional care, dignity, respect, love and compassion. The challenge underlies in changing people's perceptions, norms, practices and attitudes towards people with multiple disabilities. To overcome the backdrops, it may require a comprehensive policy advocacy involving multiple service providers in order to scale up disability-inclusive language especially individuals with families, congregate and community-based living facilities and at all levels of the community.

References:

1. DDS Five Year Plan 2022-2027 (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/report/5yrplan2022_2027/DDS-Final-5-Year-Plan-2022-2027.pdf)
2. Disability Language Guide-Stanford Disability Initiative Board, (https://disability.stanford.edu/sites/g/files/sbiybj1401/f/disability-language-guide-stanford_1.pdf)
3. Guidelines for Writing About People With Disabilities-National Network, (<https://adata.org/factsheet/ADANN-writing>)
4. Disability-inclusive language guidelines-United Nations, (<https://www.un Geneva.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/Disability-Inclusive-Language-Guidelines.pdf>)



(Photo by Timsa/Getty)



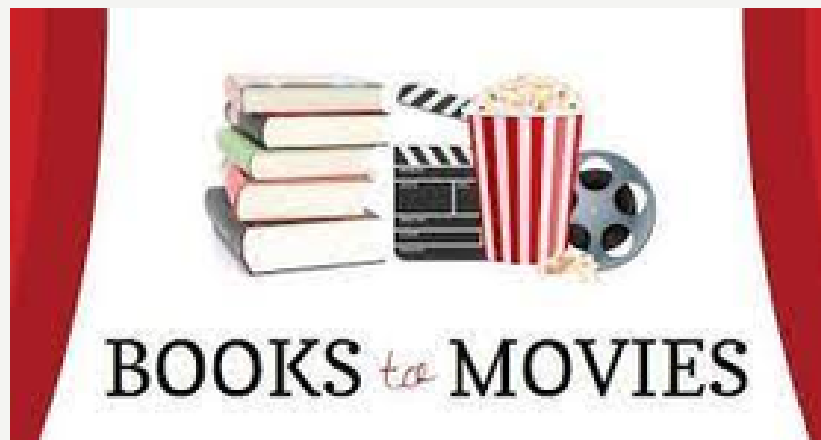
Pogrom (pō'grəm,'pōgrəm)

an organized massacre of a particular ethnic group, in particular that of Jewish people in Russia or eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. (Source: Oxford Languages)

Civil Rights (sivil 'rīts)

the rights of citizens to political and social freedom and equality. (Source: Oxford Languages)

Use Language that
puts personhood first
and emphasize
humanity

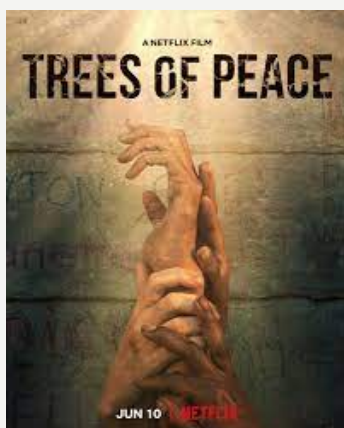


Movie recommendation by Natasha Cole, Self Advocate Coordinator

In the movie, **Selma**, Martin Luther King was portrayed by David Oyelowo, and Stephen James was portrayed by John Lewis. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 legally desegregated the South, discrimination was still rampant in certain areas, making it very difficult for blacks to register to vote in 1965 and Alabama city became the battleground in the fight for suffrage.

What historical event is Selma based on? Fifty years ago on March 7th, 1965, hundreds of people gathered in Selma, Alabama to March to the Capital City of Montgomery.

Is Selma, Lord, Selma based on a true story? Selma, Lord, Selma is a 1999 American made-for-television biographical drama. Film based on true events.



Movie recommendation by anonymous

Four women from different backgrounds forge an unbreakable sisterhood while trapped and in hiding during the genocide in Rwanda. Inspired by true events

THE WORLD'S COOKBOOK

The “Roscón de Reyes” (Kings Cake) is a traditional cake often eaten around – 3 Kings day



[For recipe click here](#)

Submitted by Natasha Cole, SAC; recipe by allrecipes.com

The History of Jambalaya

Although the exact origins of the dish are not known for sure, the most commonly held belief is that it was the result of a variety of ethnicities mixing in the port of New Orleans. Stanley Dry noted that the earliest known recipes were found in two cookbooks from the city published in 1885.

Ingredients

- Oil: Chicken and andouille sausage are sautéed in peanut oil.
- Sausage: Opt for andouille sausage for the most authentic jambalaya.
- Chicken: Cut one pound of boneless, skinless chicken breasts into 1-inch pieces.
- Spices and seasonings: This chicken and sausage jambalaya is flavored with Cajun seasoning, fresh garlic, red pepper flakes, salt, pepper, hot sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and file powder.
- Vegetables: You'll need an onion, green bell peppers, and celery.
- Rice: Opt for plain white rice for this jambalaya recipe.
- Broth: Use store-bought or homemade chicken broth to cook the rice.



Directions

1. Cook the meat: Season the sausage and chicken pieces with Cajun seasoning. Sauté the sausage until browned, then remove with a slotted spoon and set aside. Sauté chicken until lightly browned on all sides. Remove with a slotted spoon and set aside.
2. Cook the vegetables: In the same pot, sauté the onion, celery, bell pepper, and garlic until tender. Stir in the crushed tomatoes and seasonings. Add the meat and cook for 10 minutes.
3. Add the rice: Stir in the rice and chicken broth. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and cook until all the liquid is absorbed.



DDS Creating our Inclusive Community

Hello all of DDS, if you are interested in getting involved in the diversity, equity, & inclusion activities in your region please contact your Regional Liaisons and Committee Chairs.

North Region - Serginho Walker and Reginald Robinson

South Region - Karin Frodel and Robin Carlson

West Region and Southbury Training School - Ashley Barr, Lisa Fioravanti, and Rhonda David-Copeland

Public - Jennifer Garcia

If you are interested in contributing to the February newsletter please reach out to Cheryl.Ellis@ct.gov