



Black Mind Rhythm

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Most slaves took their religion seriously. In Africa the black world was inhabited by petulant spirits whose demands had to be gratified; his relationship to these spirits was regulated by the rituals and dogmas of his faith. What the slave needed now was a spiritual life which transported him from the dull routine of bondage and which promised him that a better life was within his actualization. Hence, he embraced Christianity eagerly. "The doctrine of the savior comes to the Negro slaves as their most inward need. . . . A former slave recalled the ecstasy he felt when he learned that . . . God loved black men as well as white."

In the South, except in a few border cities, the laws against slave assemblies prevented the slaves from organizing their own independent churches before the Civil War. Thus many slaves were preached to by white ministers and masters as a means of control. Yet, it was from white preachers that the slaves received their indoctrination into Christianity.

Most slaves received much more satisfaction from unsupervised religious meetings which they held secretly, or which their masters tolerated in disregard of the law. However, some educated whites believed that their interpretation contained more heathen superstition than Christian doctrine.

The practice of Voodooism, which survived among a few slaves, as well as a widespread belief in charms and spirits, stemmed in part from the African past. Frederick Douglass learned from an old African (who had "magic powers") that if a slave wore the root of a certain herb on his right side, no white man could ever whip him. Slave conjurers accomplished wonderful feats with "root work" and put frightful curses upon their enemies.

Religion was originally imposed from without for the purpose of keeping the slave enslaved and to safeguard the property of the master. First, it had to be set down that conversion did not involve a risk to the slaveholder or the possible loss of his property. By 1706, six of the colonies had passed laws perpetuating slavehood even though the slave had been converted to Christianity.

The importation of slaves was made illegal in 1808, but a high birth rate and illegal slave trading swelled the black population to 2 1/2 million by 1830. In Southern states, blacks were everywhere and whites were terrified. In this climate of white terror and reaction, the religion found its greatest use, not as a body of theological thought, but a psychological straitjacket designed to harness black yearnings for freedom. When, finally, slavemaster observed that their best, most controlled slaves were religious, religion for slaves became a necessity. It had become an undisguised instrument for their control. Ambition made a poor slave, so religion required that he bridle ambition. Learning made him more rebellious, so the new religion made learning a dangerous thing, thus the saying, "too much education will make you go crazy."

[To be continued]

SLAVERY AND RELIGION

Part 5
When the slaves left Africa they carried with them a knowledge of their own complex cultures. These surviving "Africanisms" were evident in the slaves' speech, in their dances, music, folklore and in their religion. The extent to which their African heritage

carried over to their life in America varied with time and place. In bondage, the slaves lacked cultural autonomy — the authority to apply rigorous sanctions against those who violated their own traditions. Instead, they were put under great pressure to learn and accept whichever of the white man's customs would help them to exist in a biracial society.

INFOGRAMS

By Mary J. Whitmore,
Home Economist



Potato Power

When you think of foods with high vitamin C content, you probably think first of orange juice. But how about potatoes? A single baked potato supplies about one-third the vitamin C recommended for adults, and about half the amount recommended for children 10 years old or younger.

Potatoes are also good sources of iron, thiamine, niacin and riboflavin. And they also contain magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, copper and at least twenty-seven amino acids.

The potato is literally a mineral storehouse — one of the most natural, nutritious foods you can eat. For waistline watchers, there is even more good news. Potatoes contain virtually no fat, so dieters can indulge. When baked or boiled — they have fewer calories than the same amounts of avocados, lima beans, bran flakes, prunes, rice or sweet potatoes. However, calories do multiply when butter, sour cream or other fats are added.

The Irish found out long ago that the potato was the most efficient crop they could grow. It provided more food energy and nutrients on less acreage than any other crop. So take a tip from the Irish — serve potatoes often.

Variations in preparation are almost endless and some potato dishes have become almost constant companions to other foods. For example, French fries team up with hamburgers or steak — hash browns with eggs and bacon — baked potatoes with roast beef. The all time favorite — mashed potatoes can be served with all types of meats.

Then, for a change of pace, try potatoes au gratin, or use potatoes in stews or in potato salads. Serve them often for good health, good meals, sound budgets and substantial meals. For anyway you slice them — potatoes have a lot to give besides calories.

FOOD BASKET

What Rack?
Remember the rack that is placed under the roast. Don't forget, it keeps the meat from resting in drippings and also allows the dry heat to circulate around the meat evenly. The only time a rack is not necessary is when a rib roast is being cooked. The rib bones, in this case, form a natural rack for the roast.

Ham It Up
Give coie slaw main dish status by adding julienne strips of cooked ham and well drained canned peach slices.

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