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Many American holidays are associated with celebratory foods and beverages – turkey with Thanksgiving, pumpkins with Halloween, chocolate with Valentine's Day, and eggs with Easter. America's newest federal holiday is no different. Juneteenth has its own food traditions that originate among Texas' African American rural and urban communities.

The day commemorates General Order Number 3 issued by U. S. Major General Gordon Grainger freeing Texas' enslaved labor force on June 19, 1865. This was no small segment of the Lone Star's state population. Enslaved laborers constituted 30% (182,566 persons) of the state's population. Many enslaved laborers were recently and forcibly transplanted to Texas from other southern states by owners fleeing Union armies. While other enslaved laborers were illegally smuggled into Texas from Havana, Cuba where Africans could be purchased for as little as \$300 and later resold for \$1,500 in urban southern cities.

Cuban agriculture particularly its sugar industry required an endless supply of cheap, free labor. European and New England slave ships regularly transported hundreds of thousands of Yoruba and Igbo from Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Cameroon and the Kongo, Umbundu, and Vili from Gabon, Congo, and Angola. It is estimated that about 2,000 laborers were smuggled into Texas via Havana from its independence from Mexico in 1836 to the end of the American Civil War in 1865.

These two groups of unwilling Texas migrants brought their memories of celebratory foods and beverages to the cotton and sugar fields of Texas. In particular, sharing red colored celebratory food and beverages among family members were akin to an offering or libation to deceased ancestors and to deities. West Africans would prepare mildly caffeinated drinks made with kola nut (*Cola acuminata* and *Cola nitida*) or a tart, cranberry-like beverage using roselle/hibiscus (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*). The newly emancipated of East Texas toasted their new freedom with red lemonade, strawberry-flavored and watermelon-flavored beverages since the tropical kola and roselle could not be cultivated in semitropical and temperate area of Texas.

As we celebrate the second federal anniversary of the order freeing Texas' enslaved population, Americans should gather their loved ones and share a meal of barbeque, savor the sweetness of freedom with red velvet cake, and toast to the jubilee of emancipation with a glass of hibiscus mead proudly produced in Kansas.

