# New Year in Haiti

January 1st is a doubly special holiday in Haiti. In addition to celebrating the beginning of a new year, New Year’s Day is also Haitian Independence Day.

On that day in 1804, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, the leader of the Haitian Revolution, officially declared Haiti’s independence from France. Haiti was the first country in the world where slaves successfully led a revolt and gained their freedom.

To celebrate the new year and independence, Haitians make a special dish called soup joumou. This soup, made with squash, was originally only allowed for the Haitian colonial masters, so it became a way for the newly freed slaves to celebrate their liberation. Now it is made every new year in honor of their struggle.

Families and friends gather to share large pots of the delicious soup, traditionally made with calabaza squash, marinated beef, peppers, herbs, pasta, and other vegetables like carrots and potatoes. Every family has their own special recipe and it’s a labor-intensive process that brings everyone together.