

**THE NEW YAM FESTIVAL OF NDIIGBO
(eastern part of Nigeria)**

The new yam festival of Ndi-Igbo (the eastern part of Nigeria) West Africa occurs at the beginning of the harvest period of the Eastern scarp land which occurs on early April. It marks off the border between the Harvest period and the next planting season of the year.

It is a ceremony that is being done by the people (traditional rural people and often times the urban citizens too). It's a very great occasion celebrated by the people in appreciating the gods of their land for granting them a good planting season with a bountiful harvest and also seeking for more of his abundance in the next planting season. It involves mainly the eating of yam (the King of the arable staple food of the easterners) with palm oil prepared together with condiments such as salt, pepper and other flavourings. The yam may be roasted or probably cooked depending on the choice of the eater.

During this occasion, libations are poured on the earth such as gins, rums, spirits and other sacred victuals in appreciation of this season. Prayers are often said by the chief priest to the gods of the land such as Agwu, Nri and Odo e.t.c. the Iri-ji festival is a commemorative festival that brings together all the citizens of the village whether home and abroad together. This occasion is often celebrated in the village square where a lot of events connected to the ceremony are performed such as the beating of the drums, dancing, eating and drinking and equally extension of greetings or regards to extended friends and well wishers.

Food (yam and its sauce) is brought generally is a tray and kept virtually for all to take. It is eaten generally to everyone's satisfaction. Sometimes the yam maybe pounded or prepared in any other way. After the celebration in the village square, the individuals go home to continue the celebration in their houses. It takes two-three days for the commemoration depending on the type of community and its leaders. During this season, everyone is excited as there are lots to eat and drink as a result of the new harvest season. Masquerades are also seen during this festival as one of the excitatory sightseeing. Different kinds of masquerades are seen dancing around such as izaga ndi igbo, apia, e.t.c.

The New yam festival is really a long expected ceremony in the culture of the Easterners of the West Africans as it marks the end of a hard labour and strenuous season of planting and the beginning of an enjoyable season.