



Mariposa READ
(Read, Enjoy, And Discover)

Thursday, November 24, 2022 at 7:30 PM
Sunday, November 27, 2022 at 2:30 PM

Thanksgiving

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Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is a federal holiday in the United States of America. It is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Most of us were taught that the holiday was about the pilgrims giving thanks for the feast shared by the Native Americans. Therefore, most of us think of Thanksgiving as an American holiday. However other countries, such as Canada, Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Liberia celebrate a day of giving thanks. Germany and Japan have a very similar festival as well. We will learn more about those celebrations in next week's show here on KRYZ Radio.

According to American tradition, the "First Thanksgiving" was celebrated by the 53 Pilgrims that survived their trip to the New World and their first, very harsh winter in their new home. They came from England on the Mayflower and landed at Plymouth Rock. Only four adult women survived that winter, and they did all of the cooking with the help of their daughters and some male servants. The celebration lasted three days and was held at the Plymouth Plantation after their first harvest, a very successful one, in October 1621. The feast and celebrations lasted for three days and was shared with 90 Wampanoag Native Americans. Other Native American tribes had given the Pilgrims food throughout the winter to help them survive. The Wampanoag heard the Pilgrims' celebratory gunfire and came to the plantation fearing a war had started with another tribe. They saw the feast and were warmly welcomed to join the celebration. They killed some deer and brought venison and other food to the feast.

Others claim that a Thanksgiving celebration in Virginia in 1619 by 38 English settlers who had just landed at Berkeley Hundred aboard the ship Margaret was the first. Historians have uncovered Thanksgiving services as early as 1607 in the first permanent settlement of Virginia and other Thanksgiving celebrations in French and Spanish settlements.

Our country has been celebrating Thanksgiving on and off since 1789. President George Washington, after the defeat of the British at Saratoga, made a proclamation for it to be a national holiday at the request of Congress. Many chose not to observe the holiday. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving and praise to God. His speech included a call to Americans to ask God to "heal the wounds of the nation." In 1870,

President Ulysses S. Grant made Thanksgiving a yearly appointed federal holiday when he signed the Holidays Act into law. In 1885 Congress made Thanksgiving and other federal holidays a paid holiday for all federal workers throughout the United States. President Lincoln had declared that Thanksgiving would be the last Thursday in November. President Franklin D. Roosevelt moved the holiday to one week earlier from 1939 to 1941. In those days it was considered inappropriate to start any Christmas celebrations until after Thanksgiving. His hope was to help the economy during the Great Depression and give people more time to shop before Christmas. This made a lot of people very unhappy and it turned into a huge political argument. In 1942, Congress put forth an act to give Thanksgiving the permanent observation date of the fourth Thursday in November. It is no longer up to the President to choose the dates.

People in Europe were holding feasts to celebrate harvest and setting aside time to give thanks for their blessings long before settlers arrived in America. The Puritans observed days of fasting and prayer and days of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest. The French and Spanish had their own thanksgiving celebrations in the 16th century. We will talk more about Thanksgiving celebrations in other parts of the world in the next Mariposa READ.

Aside from attending a religious service and having a huge feast, there are other traditions that Americans have come to celebrate on Thanksgiving. On Thanksgiving Eve there may be shooting matches where the prizes (or the targets) are turkeys. There are “turkey-trot” running races the morning of Thanksgiving in many American cities. The American Football League has played games on Thanksgiving every year since it was created, except during World War II. American Football has become a huge tradition for many, with bowls and championship games happening all throughout the holiday and weekend. Many cities have parades on Thanksgiving Day. Perhaps the most famous is the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York. It is said to be the world’s largest parade. That parade has been televised since 1953 and at the very end of the parade is a float with Santa Claus on it. It was a long-held tradition that that was the beginning of the Christmas season.

While historians may disagree on what was truly the first official, recorded celebration of what we now call Thanksgiving, there are many facts upon which they all agree. Early settlers who made the long trip across the ocean all had celebrations and gave thanks to God for being off of the boats and on dry land. Early settlers were grateful for rains that made bountiful harvests and for good hunting and fishing that brought food to the settlement. When President John F. Kennedy gave a speech to address the debate over where the first official Thanksgiving gets to be credited, he spoke of settlers who “on the appointed day, they gave reverent thanks for their safety, for the health of their children, for the fertility of their fields, for the love which bound them together, and for the faith which united them with their God.”

Thanksgiving originated as a religious and cultural tradition of giving thanks and the harvest festival. Today it is celebrated as a secular, civil, or non-religious tradition as well. The centerpiece of the Thanksgiving celebrations was a grand feast, and that is still the same today. The traditional foods shared for the dinner are dishes indigenous to the American continent such

as turkey, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, stuffing, squash, corn, green beans, brussel sprouts, cranberries, and pumpkin pie.

There is a lot of tradition around the turkey itself this time of year. It is the most common centerpiece of the Thanksgiving meal. Families usually roast it and fill it with stuffing. The stuffing may or may not include the giblets of the turkey, bread crumbs, onion, celery, and spices. In modern times many families smoke or fry their turkeys. 40 million turkeys are eaten on Thanksgiving with the total cost as a nation exceeding \$1 billion. Americans eat more food on Thanksgiving than on any other day of the year.

The President of the United States is given the gift of a Thanksgiving turkey every year since 1873. In 1947, the National Turkey Federation began presenting our president with one live turkey and two dressed turkeys. This is now a ceremony called National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation. President John F. Kennedy chose to spare the turkey given to him. He said he did not plan to eat the bird. By the late 1970's the live turkeys were sent to a petting zoo and the cooked ones were sent to charities. President Ronald Reagan made a joke at the 1987 presentation and said he was pardoning the turkey. President George H.W. Bush made the turkey pardon a permanent annual tradition. The pardoned turkeys get to live out their lives in the care of agricultural departments of major universities.

For some, it is tradition to fast for the days leading up to Thanksgiving dinner and thank God for their many blessings. Other Thanksgiving customs include watching football games or parades. Most communities have annual food drives and many people and businesses make it a custom to donate to charities to serve Thanksgiving dinner for the poor. Vegan and Vegetarian households call their celebration Gentle Thanksgiving or "Plantsgiving" as they substitute plant-based foods for the turkey. Most people gather with their families on Thanksgiving and this has led to a new tradition called "Friendsgiving" where people gather on a different day to share a special meal with friends. Some people attend religious services, and some say grace or a prayer before they begin their meal. Many families have adopted the tradition to go around the dining table and share something for which they are thankful.

Whatever your tradition for this special holiday, we at Mariposa READ and KRYZ Radio hope that you get to have some wonderful food, are surrounded by loved ones, and have a great many reasons to be thankful in your life. Happy Thanksgiving!