



# Thanksgiving Day

Every year on the fourth Thursday in November Americans celebrate a holiday called Thanksgiving. The first people to celebrate this day were the Pilgrims, in November, 1621. They sat down to eat together and to give thanks to God for enabling them to survive the hardships of their first year in America.

The Pilgrims were joined at their feast by local Amerindians. The Wampanoag and Pequamid people of the nearby forests had shared corn with the Pilgrims and shown them the best places to catch fish. Later the Amerindians had given seed corn to the English settlers and shown them how to plant crops that would grow well in the American soil. Without them there would have been no Thanksgiving.

First Thanksgiving



Abraham Lincoln declared a national day of Thanksgiving in 1863.

Nowadays most families follow traditions begun on the first Thanksgiving, but many have their own traditions that they follow each year. Here are some of the common traditions associated with "Turkey Day."

One of the best things about Thanksgiving is spending time with family. Many people live far from family members and travel long distances by car, train, or plane to be with their loved ones. Thanksgiving is the busiest travel day of the year!



Traditional foods are a large part of Thanksgiving celebrations. Many families include the entire family in the food preparation. Traditional foods include turkey, stuffing, gravy, sweet potatoes, cornbread, mashed potatoes, and cranberry sauce. Many people serve pie for dessert at the end of the meal. Popular pie flavors are pumpkin, pecan, sweet potato, and apple.



Some families include breaking the turkey's wishbone as part of their celebration. The wishbone is found attached to the breast meat in the turkey's chest. After the meat has been removed and the wishbone has had a chance to become dry and brittle, two people each take one end of the bone, make a wish, and pull. Whoever ends up with the larger part of the bone gets their wish!

Each year at Thanksgiving, the President of the United States receives a gift of a live turkey (along with an alternate in case something happens to the official turkey). At a White House ceremony, the president traditionally "pardons" the National Thanksgiving Turkey and the alternate turkeys, allowing them to live out the rest of their lives on a farm.

Television also plays a part in Thanksgiving celebrations. Many families watch the New York City Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (presented by the U.S.-based department store chain Macy's) which is held in Manhattan starting at 9:00 a.m. The parade includes marching bands, floats, songs and performances from Broadway musicals, and giant helium-filled balloons. The parade tradition started in 1924.



*Source: An Illustrated History of the USA (Bryn O'Callaghan)*

*Wikipedia*

*kids.nationalgeographic.com*