

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Day is a national holiday celebrated primarily in Canada and the United States as a day of giving thanks for the blessing of the harvest and of the preceding year. It is celebrated on the second Monday of October in Canada and on the fourth Thursday of November in the United States. Several other places around the world observe similar celebrations. Thanksgiving has its historical roots in religious and cultural traditions dating from the Protestant Reformation.



History

In the USA

The 1621 Plymouth feast and thanksgiving was prompted by a good harvest. Pilgrims and Puritans who began emigrating from England in the 1620s and 1630s carried the tradition of Days of Fasting and Days of Thanksgiving with them to New England. In September 1620, a small ship called the Mayflower left Plymouth, England, after a treacherous and uncomfortable crossing that lasted 66 days, carrying 102 passengers—an assortment of religious separatists seeking a new home where they could freely practice their faith and other individuals lured by the promise of prosperity and land ownership in the New World.

Several days of Thanksgiving were held in early New England history, the Plymouth colonists and Wampanoag Indians shared an autumn harvest feast that is acknowledged today as one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations in the colonies. For more than two centuries, days of thanksgiving were celebrated by individual colonies and states. It wasn't until 1863, in the midst of the Civil War, that President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day to be held each November.

Thanksgiving at Plymouth

The Puritans dropped anchor near the tip of Cape Cod, far north of their intended destination at the mouth of the Hudson River. One month later, the Mayflower crossed Massachusetts Bay, where the Pilgrims, as they are now commonly known, began the work of establishing a village at Plymouth.

Thanksgiving Traditions

In many American households, the Thanksgiving celebration has lost much of its original religious significance; instead, it now centers on cooking and sharing a bountiful meal with family and friends. Turkey, a Thanksgiving staple so ubiquitous it has become all but synonymous with the holiday, may or may not have been on offer when the Pilgrims hosted the inaugural feast in 1621. Today, however, nearly 90 percent of Americans eat the bird—whether roasted, baked or deep-fried—on Thanksgiving, according to the National Turkey Federation. Other traditional foods include stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie. Volunteering is a common Thanksgiving Day activity, and communities often hold food drives and host free dinners for the less fortunate.



Parades have also become an integral part of the holiday in cities and towns across the United States. Presented by Macy's department store since 1924, New York City's Thanksgiving Day parade is the largest and most famous, attracting some 2 to 3 million spectators along its 2.5-mile route and drawing an enormous television audience. It typically features marching bands, performers, elaborate floats conveying various celebrities and giant balloons shaped like cartoon characters.

Beginning in the mid-20th century and perhaps even earlier, the president of the United States has "pardoned" one or two Thanksgiving turkeys each year, sparing the birds from slaughter and sending them to a farm for retirement. A number of U.S. governors also perform the annual turkey pardoning ritual.



Old Fashioned Pumpkin Pie Recipe

- Cook time: 1 hour
- Yield: Serves 8.

Ingredients

- 2 cups of pumpkin pulp purée from a sugar pumpkin* or from canned pumpkin purée (
- 1 1/2 cup heavy cream or 1 12 oz. can of evaporated milk
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/3 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs plus the yolk of a third egg
- 2 teaspoons of cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamon
- 1/2 teaspoon of lemon zest
- 1 good crust (see [pâte brisée recipe](#))



* To make pumpkin purée from scratch, cut a medium-small sugar pumpkin in half. Scrape out the insides (reserving the pumpkins seeds to toast) and discard. Line a baking sheet with Silpat or foil. Place the pumpkin halves cut side down on the lined baking sheet and bake at 350°F until a fork can easily pierce them, about an hour to an hour and a half. Remove from oven, let cool, scoop out the pulp. Alternatively you can cut the pumpkin into sections and steam in a saucepan with a couple inches of water at the bottom, until soft (strain before using). If you want the purée to be extra smooth, press the pulp through a food mill or chinois.

Method

- 1** Preheat your oven to 425°F.
- 2** Beat the eggs in a large bowl. Mix in the sugars, salt, spices, and lemon zest. Mix in the pumpkin purée. Stir in the cream. Beat together until everything is well mixed.
- 3** Pour the filling into an uncooked pie shell. Bake at a high temperature of 425°F for 15 minutes. Then after 15 minutes, lower the temperature to 350°F. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes more, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. (About half-way through the baking, you may want to put foil around the edges or use a pie protector to keep the crust from getting too browned.)
- 4** Cool the pumpkin pie on a wire rack for 2 hours. Note that the pumpkin pie will come out of the oven all puffed up (from the leavening of the eggs), and will deflate as it cools.
Serve with whipped cream.