

Thanksgiving (United States)

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For Thanksgiving in other countries, see [Thanksgiving](#).

Thanksgiving



The First Thanksgiving, painting by [Jean Leon Gerome Ferris](#) (1863–1930)

Observed by [United States](#)

Type National

Date fourth Thursday in November

2009 date November 26, 2009

Celebrations [parades](#), spending time with family, [football](#) games, [feasting](#)

Thanksgiving or **Thanksgiving Day**, presently celebrated on the fourth Thursday in November, has been an annual tradition in the [United States](#) since 1863. Thanksgiving was historically a [religious](#) observation to give [thanks](#) to [God](#), but was established as a secular [federal holiday](#) in 1941.^[1]

The first Thanksgiving was celebrated to give thanks to God for helping the [Pilgrims](#) of Plymouth Colony survive the brutal winter.^[2] The first Thanksgiving feast lasted three days providing enough food for 53 pilgrims and 90 Native Americans.^[3] The feast consisted of [fowl](#), [venison](#), [fish](#), [lobster](#), [clams](#), [berries](#), [fruit](#), [pumpkin](#), and [squash](#). William Bradford's note that, "besides waterfowl, there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many,"^[4] probably gave rise to the American tradition of turkey at Thanksgiving.

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History

1619 Thanksgiving, the Virginia colony

On December 4, 1619, 38 English settlers arrived at [Berkeley Hundred](#), which comprised about 8,000 acres (32 km²) on the north bank of the [James River](#), near Herring Creek, in an area then known as [Charles Cittie](#), about 20 miles (32 km) upstream from [Jamestown](#), where the first permanent settlement of the [Colony of Virginia](#) had been established on May 14, 1607.

The group's charter required that the day of arrival be observed yearly as a "day of thanksgiving" to God. On that first day, Captain John Woodleaf held the service of thanksgiving. As quoted from the section of the Charter of Berkeley Hundred specifying the thanksgiving service: "We ordaine that the day of our ships arrival at the place assigned for plantacon in the land of Virginia shall be yearly and perpetually kept holy as a day of thanksgiving to [Almighty God](#)."^[5]

During the [Indian Massacre of 1622](#), nine of the settlers at Berkeley Hundreds were killed, as well as about a third of the entire population of the Virginia Colony. The Berkeley Hundred site and other outlying locations were abandoned as the colonists withdrew to Jamestown and other more secure points.

After several years, the site became [Berkeley Plantation](#), and was long the traditional home of the Harrison family, one of the [First Families of Virginia](#). In 1634, it became part of the first

eight [shires of Virginia](#), as [Charles City County](#), one of the oldest in the [United States](#), and is located along [Virginia State Route 5](#), which runs parallel to the river's northern borders past sites of many of the [James River Plantations](#) between the colonial capital city of [Williamsburg](#) (now the site of [Colonial Williamsburg](#)) and the capital of the [Commonwealth of Virginia](#) at [Richmond](#).

1621 Thanksgiving, the Pilgrims at Plymouth



Painting of "The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth" By Jennie A. Brownscombe. (1914)

The modern Thanksgiving holiday traces its origins from a 1621 celebration at the Plymouth Plantation, where the Plymouth settlers held a harvest feast after a successful growing season. It is this iconic event that is generally referred to as the "First Thanksgiving."

[Squanto](#), a Patuxet Native American who resided with the [Wampanoag](#) tribe, taught the [Pilgrims](#) how to catch eel and grow corn and served as an interpreter for them (Squanto had learned English while enslaved in Europe and during travels in England). The Pilgrims set apart a day to celebrate at Plymouth immediately after their first harvest, in 1621. At the time, this was not regarded as a Thanksgiving observance; harvest festivals existed in English and Wampanoag tradition alike. Several colonists gave personal accounts of the 1621 feast in [Plymouth, Massachusetts](#). The [Pilgrims](#), most of whom were [Separatists](#), are not to be confused with [Puritans](#) who established their own [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#) nearby (current day [Boston](#)) in 1628 and had very different religious beliefs.^[6]

[William Bradford](#), in [Of Plymouth Plantation](#):

Thus they found the Lord to be with them in all their ways, and to bless their outgoings and incomings, for which let His holy name have the praise forever, to all posterity. They began now to gather in the small harvest they had, and to fit up their houses and dwellings against winter, being all well recovered in health and strength and had all things in good plenty. For as some were thus employed in affairs abroad, others were exercised in fishing, about cod and bass and other fish, of which they took good store, of which every family had their portion. All the summer there was no want; and now began to come in store of fowl, as winter approached, of which this place did abound when they came first (but afterward decreased by degrees). And besides waterfowl there was great store of wild turkeys, of which they took many, besides venison, etc. Besides, they had about a peck a meal a week to a person, or now since harvest, Indian corn to the proportion. Which made many afterwards write so largely of their plenty here to their friends in England, which were not feigned but true reports.

[Edward Winslow](#), in [Mourt's Relation](#):

Our harvest being gotten in, our governor sent four men on fowling, that so we might after a special manner rejoice together after we had gathered the fruits of our labor. They four in one day killed as much fowl as, with a little help beside, served the company almost a week. At

which time, amongst other recreations, we exercised our arms, many of the Indians coming amongst us, and among the rest their greatest king [Massasoit](#), with some ninety men, whom for three days we entertained and feasted, and they went out and killed five deer, which we brought to the plantation and bestowed on our governor, and upon the captain and others. And although it be not always so plentiful as it was at this time with us, yet by the goodness of God, we are so far from want that we often wish you partakers of our plenty.

The Pilgrims held an even greater Thanksgiving celebration in 1623, after a switch from communal farming to privatized farming^{[7][8]} and a refreshing rain^[9] resulted in a larger harvest. Referring to the 1623 harvest after a nearly catastrophic [drought](#), Bradford wrote:

And afterwards the Lord sent them such seasonable showers, with interchange of fair warm weather as, through His blessing, caused a fruitful and liberal harvest, to their no small comfort and rejoicing. For which mercy, in time convenient, they also set apart a day of thanksgiving... By this time harvest was come, and instead of famine now God gave them plenty ... for which they blessed God. And the effect of their particular planting was well seen, for all had ... pretty well ... so as any general want or famine had not been amongst them since to this day.^[10]

– *William Bradford, Of Plymouth Plantation*

Irregular Thanksgivings continued after favorable events and days of fasting after unfavorable ones. In the Plymouth tradition, a thanksgiving day was a church observance, rather than a feast day. Gradually, an annual Thanksgiving after the harvest developed in the mid-17th century. This did not occur on any set day or necessarily on the same day in different colonies in America.

Other colonies

The [Massachusetts Bay Colony](#) (consisting mainly of [Puritan](#) Christians) celebrated Thanksgiving for the first time in 1630, and frequently thereafter until about 1680, when it became an annual festival in that colony; and Connecticut as early as 1639 and annually after 1647, except in 1675. The Dutch in [New Netherland](#) appointed a day for giving thanks in 1644 and occasionally thereafter.

[Charlestown, Massachusetts](#) held the first recorded Thanksgiving observance June 29, 1671 by proclamation of the town's governing council.

Later in the 1700s individual colonies would periodically designate a day of thanksgiving in honor of a military victory, an adoption of a state constitution or an exceptionally bountiful crop. Such a Thanksgiving Day celebration was held in December 1777 by the colonies nationwide, commemorating the surrender of British General [Burgoyne](#) at [Saratoga](#).

During the 18th century individual colonies commonly observed days of thanksgiving throughout each year. We might not recognize a traditional Thanksgiving Day from that period, as it was not a day marked by plentiful food and drink as is today's custom, but rather a day set aside for prayer and [fasting](#).

The Revolutionary War to nationhood

During the [American Revolutionary War](#) the Continental Congress appointed one or more thanksgiving days each year, each time recommending to the executives of the various states the observance of these days in their states. The First National Proclamation of Thanksgiving was given by the Continental Congress in 1777:

FOR AS MUCH as it is the indispensable Duty of all Men to adore the superintending Providence of Almighty God; to acknowledge with Gratitude their Obligation to him for Benefits received, and to implore such farther Blessings as they stand in Need of: And it having pleased him in his abundant Mercy, not only to continue to us the innumerable Bounties of his common Providence; but also to smile upon us in the Prosecution of a just and necessary War, for the Defense and Establishment of our unalienable Rights and Liberties; particularly in that he hath been pleased, in so great a Measure, to prosper the Means used for the Support of our Troops, and to crown our Arms with most signal success:

It is therefore recommended to the legislative or executive Powers of these UNITED STATES to set apart THURSDAY, the eighteenth Day of December next, for SOLEMN THANKSGIVING and PRAISE: That at one Time and with one Voice, the good People may express the grateful Feelings of their Hearts, and consecrate themselves to the Service of their Divine Benefactor; and that, together with their sincere Acknowledgments and Offerings, they may join the penitent Confession of their manifold Sins, whereby they had forfeited every Favor; and their humble and earnest Supplication that it may please GOD through the Merits of JESUS CHRIST, mercifully to forgive and blot them out of Remembrance; That it may please him graciously to afford his Blessing on the Governments of these States respectively, and prosper the public Council of the whole: To inspire our Commanders, both by Land and Sea, and all under them, with that Wisdom and Fortitude which may render them fit Instruments, under the Providence of Almighty GOD, to secure for these United States, the greatest of all human Blessings, INDEPENDENCE and PEACE: That it may please him, to prosper the Trade and Manufactures of the People, and the Labor of the Husbandman, that our Land may yield its Increase: To take Schools and Seminaries of Education, so necessary for cultivating the Principles of true Liberty, Virtue and Piety, under his nurturing Hand; and to prosper the Means of Religion, for the promotion and enlargement of that Kingdom, which consisteth "in Righteousness, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost.

And it is further recommended, That servile Labor, and such Recreation, as, though at other Times innocent, may be unbecoming the Purpose of this Appointment, be omitted on so solemn an Occasion.

[George Washington](#), leader of the revolutionary forces in the [American Revolutionary War](#), proclaimed a Thanksgiving in December 1777 as a victory celebration honoring the defeat of the British at [Saratoga](#).

Thanksgiving proclamations in the first thirty years of nationhood

As President, on October 3, 1789, George Washington made the following proclamation and created the first Thanksgiving Day designated by the national government of the United States of America:

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor, and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me "to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by

acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness. Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be. That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks, for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war, for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed, for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted, for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us. And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions, to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually, to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed, to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord. To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease of science among them and Us, and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best. Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.^[11]

[George Washington](#) again proclaimed a Thanksgiving in 1795.

President [John Adams](#) declared Thanksgivings in 1798 and 1799. No Thanksgiving proclamations were issued by [Thomas Jefferson](#) but [James Madison](#) renewed the tradition in 1814, in response to resolutions of Congress, at the close of the War of 1812. Madison also declared the holiday twice in 1815; however, none of these were celebrated in autumn. In 1816, Governor Plamer of New Hampshire appointed Thursday, November 14 to be observed as a day of Public Thanksgiving and Governor Brooks of Massachusetts appointed Thursday, November 28 to be "observed throughout that State as a day of Thanksgiving."^[12]

A thanksgiving day was annually appointed by the governor of [New York](#) from 1817. In some of the [Southern states](#) there was opposition to the observance of such a day on the ground that it was a relic of Puritanic bigotry, but by 1858 proclamations appointing a day of thanksgiving were issued by the governors of 25 states and two territories.

Lincoln and the Civil War



Sketch of Thanksgiving in Civil War camp in 1861.



 Lithograph, Home To Thanksgiving 1867

In the middle of the [American Civil War](#), President [Abraham Lincoln](#), prompted by a series of editorials written by [Sarah Josepha Hale](#),^[13] proclaimed a national Thanksgiving Day, to be celebrated on the final Thursday in November 1863:

The year that is drawing towards its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign States to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere except in the theatre of military conflict; while that theatre has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union. Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defence, have not arrested the plough, the shuttle, or the ship; the axe had enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege and the battle-field; and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years, with large increase of freedom. No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy. It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and voice by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to his tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility and Union. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed. Done at the city of Washington, this [third day of October](#), in the [year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three](#), and of the independence of the United States the eighty-eighth." *Proclamation of President Abraham Lincoln*, October 3, 1863.^[13]

Since 1863, Thanksgiving has been observed annually in the United States.

1939 to 1941

Main article: [Franksgiving](#)

Abraham Lincoln's successors as president followed his example of annually declaring the final Thursday in November to be Thanksgiving. But in 1939, President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) broke with this tradition. November had five Thursdays that year, and Roosevelt declared the fourth Thursday as Thanksgiving rather than the fifth one. In 1940 and 1941, years in which November had four Thursdays, he declared the third one as Thanksgiving. Although many popular histories state otherwise, he made clear that his plan was to establish it on the next-to-last Thursday in the month instead of the last one. With the country still in the midst of [The Great Depression](#), Roosevelt thought an earlier Thanksgiving would give merchants a longer period to sell goods before [Christmas](#). Increasing profits and spending during this period, Roosevelt hoped, would help bring the country out of the Depression. At the time, advertising goods for Christmas before Thanksgiving was considered inappropriate. [Fred Lazarus, Jr.](#), founder of the [Federated Department Stores](#) (later Macy's), is credited with convincing Roosevelt to push Thanksgiving back a week to expand the shopping season.^[14]

However, many localities had made a tradition of celebrating on the last Thursday, and since a presidential declaration of Thanksgiving Day was not legally binding, it was widely disregarded. Twenty-three states went along with Roosevelt's recommendation, 22 did not, and some, like [Texas](#), could not decide and took both weeks as government holidays. Critics termed Roosevelt's dating of the holiday as "Franksgiving".

1942 to present

On October 6, 1941, both houses of the [U.S. Congress](#) passed a joint resolution fixing the traditional last-Thursday date for the holiday beginning in 1942. However, in December of that year the [Senate](#) passed an amendment to the resolution that split the difference by requiring that Thanksgiving be observed annually on the fourth Thursday of November, which was sometimes the last Thursday and sometimes (less frequently) the next to last.^[15] On December 26, 1941 President Roosevelt signed this bill, for the first time making the date of Thanksgiving a matter of federal law. See 55 Stat. 862 (1941).



President Truman receiving a Thanksgiving turkey from members of the Poultry and Egg National Board and other representatives of the turkey industry, outside the White House

Since 1947, or possibly earlier, the [National Turkey Federation](#) has presented the President of the United States with one live turkey and two dressed turkeys, in a ceremony known as the [National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation](#). The live turkey is [pardoned](#) and lives out the rest of its days on a peaceful farm. While it is commonly held that this pardoning tradition began with [Harry Truman](#) in 1947, the Truman Library has been unable to find any evidence for

this. The earliest on record is with [George H. W. Bush](#) in 1989.^[16] Still others claim that the tradition dates back to [Abraham Lincoln](#) pardoning his son's pet turkey.^[17] Both stories have been quoted in more recent presidential speeches. In more recent years, two turkeys have been pardoned, in case the original turkey becomes unavailable for presidential pardoning.^{[18][19]}

Since 1970, a group of [Native Americans](#) and other assorted protesters have held a [National Day of Mourning](#) protest on Thanksgiving at [Plymouth Rock](#) in [Plymouth, Massachusetts](#) in the name of social equality and in honor of [political prisoners](#).

Traditional celebrations

Foods of the season

 [Wikibooks Cookbook](#) has a recipe/module on [Turkey with stuffing](#)

U.S. tradition compares the holiday with a meal held in 1621 by the [Wampanoag](#) and the [Pilgrims](#) who settled in [Plymouth, Massachusetts](#). It is continued in modern times with the [Thanksgiving dinner](#), traditionally featuring turkey, playing a large role in the celebration of Thanksgiving. Some of the details of the American Thanksgiving story are [myths](#) that developed in the 1890s and early 1900s as part of the effort to forge a common national identity in the aftermath of the [Civil War](#) and in the [melting pot](#) of new immigrants.



Traditional Thanksgiving Dinner

In the United States, certain kinds of food are traditionally served at Thanksgiving meals. Firstly, baked or roasted [turkey](#) is usually the featured item on any Thanksgiving feast table (so much so that Thanksgiving is sometimes referred to as "Turkey Day"). [Stuffing](#), [mashed potatoes](#) with [gravy](#), [sweet potatoes](#), [cranberry sauce](#), [sweet corn](#), other [fall vegetables](#), and [pumpkin pie](#) are commonly associated with Thanksgiving dinner. All of these are actually native to the Americas or were introduced as a new food source to the Europeans when they arrived. As an alternative to turkey, many [vegetarians](#) or [vegans](#) eat [tofurky](#), a meatless turkey made of [tofu](#).

The less fortunate are often provided with food at Thanksgiving time. Most communities have annual food drives that collect non-perishable packaged and canned foods, and corporations sponsor charitable distributions of staple foods and Thanksgiving dinners.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

Giving thanks



Saying grace before carving the turkey at Thanksgiving dinner

Thanksgiving was originally a [religious](#) observance for all the members of the community to give thanks to God for a common purpose. Historic reasons for community thanksgivings are the 1541 thanksgiving mass after the expedition of Coronado safely crossing part of Texas and finding game,^{[20][21]} and the 1777 thanksgiving after the victory in the revolutionary battle of Saratoga.^[22] In his 1789 Proclamation, President Washington gave many noble reasons for a national Thanksgiving, including “for the civil and religious liberty,” for “useful knowledge,” and for God’s “kind care” and “His Providence.”^[23] The only presidents to inject a specifically Christian focus to their proclamation have been [Grover Cleveland](#) in 1896,^[24] and [William McKinley](#) in 1900.^[25] Several other presidents have cited the Judeo-Christian tradition. [Gerald Ford](#)’s 1975 declaration made no clear reference to any divinity.^[26]

The tradition of giving thanks to God is continued today in various forms. Various religious and spiritual organizations offer services and events on Thanksgiving themes the week-end before, the day of, or the week-end after Thanksgiving.

At home, it is a holiday tradition in many families to begin the Thanksgiving dinner by saying [grace](#) (a prayer before or after a meal).^[27] The custom is portrayed in the photograph “Family Holding Hands and Praying Before a Thanksgiving Meal.” Traditionally grace was led by the hostess or host, though in later times it is usual for others to contribute.^[28]

Vacation and travel

During Thanksgiving Day families and friends usually gather for a large meal or dinner. Consequently the Thanksgiving holiday weekend is one of the busiest [travel](#) periods of the year. Thanksgiving is a four-day or five-day weekend vacation for schools and colleges. Most business and government workers (78% in 2007) are given Thanksgiving and the day after as paid holidays.^[29] Thanksgiving Eve, the night before Thanksgiving, is one of the busiest nights of the year for bars and clubs, as many college students and others return to their hometowns to reunite with friends and family.^[30]

In [Buffalo, New York](#), the Saturday after Thanksgiving is the day of the [World's Largest Disco](#), a tribute to [disco](#) and the [1970s](#) that regularly draws thousands of dancers and the top performing acts of the 1970s.

Parades

See also: [List of holiday parades](#)

In [New York City](#), the [Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade](#) is held annually every Thanksgiving Day from the Upper West Side of [Manhattan](#) to [Macy's](#) flagship store in [Herald Square](#), and televised nationally by [NBC](#). The parade features [parade floats](#) with specific themes, scenes

from Broadway plays, large balloons of cartoon characters and TV personalities, and high school marching bands. The float that traditionally ends the Macy's Parade is the [Santa Claus](#) float, the arrival of which is an unofficial sign of the beginning of the Christmas season.

There are Thanksgiving parades in many other cities, including:

- [Chicago, Illinois](#) (*McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade*), airs on [WGN-TV](#) and [WGN America](#)
- [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#) (*6abc IKEA Thanksgiving Day Parade*), claims to be the oldest parade, launched in 1920 and airs on [WPVI-TV](#)
- [Plymouth, Massachusetts](#) (*America's Hometown Thanksgiving Parade*), held the Saturday before Thanksgiving
- [Houston, Texas](#) (*H-E-B Holiday Parade*), airs on [KHOU-TV](#)
- [El Paso, Texas](#) (*Sun Bowl Parade*)
- [St. Louis, Missouri](#) (*Ameren St. Louis Thanksgiving Parade*), airs on [KMOV](#)
- [Detroit, Michigan](#) (*America's Thanksgiving Parade*), airs on [WDIV-TV](#)
- [Seattle, Washington](#)
- [Fountain Hills, Arizona](#)
- [Stamford, Connecticut](#) (*UBS Parade Spectacular*), held the Sunday before Thanksgiving, designed as a complement to the Macy's parade
- [Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis, Minnesota](#) (*Target Holidazzle Parades*), a series of parades that begin the Friday after Thanksgiving
- [Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#) (*Celebrate the Season Parade*), airs the Saturday after Thanksgiving, airs on [WPXI](#)
- [Los Angeles, California](#) (*Hollywood Christmas Parade*), traditionally held on Wednesday night before Thanksgiving, now held the weekend after, televised on [KTLA](#) and [MyNetwork TV](#)
- [Charlotte, North Carolina](#) (*Carolinas' Thanksgiving Day Parade*), airs on [CBS](#) affiliate [WBTV](#)

Several other parades have a loose association with Thanksgiving, thanks to [CBS](#)'s now-discontinued *All-American Thanksgiving Day Parade* coverage. Parades that were covered during this era were the *Aloha Floral Parade* held in [Honolulu, Hawaii](#) every September, the [Toronto Santa Claus Parade](#) in [Toronto, Ontario, Canada](#), and the *Opryland Aqua Parade* (held from 1996 to 2001 by the [Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center](#) in Nashville); the Opryland parade was discontinued and replaced by a taped parade in [Miami Beach, Florida](#) in 2002. A [Disneyland](#) parade was also featured on CBS until Disney purchased rival [ABC](#).

Shopping

Main article: [Black Friday \(shopping\)](#)

The American [Christmas season](#) traditionally begins the day after Thanksgiving, it is known as "[Black Friday](#)", although most stores start to stock for and promote the December holidays immediately after [Halloween](#) or earlier.

Football

Main article: [American football on Thanksgiving](#)

See also: [Thanksgiving Classic](#)

[American football](#) is an important part of many Thanksgiving celebrations in the United States. Professional games are traditionally held on Thanksgiving Day; until recently, these were the only games played during the week apart from Sunday or Monday night. The [National Football League](#) has played games on Thanksgiving every year since its creation; the tradition is referred to as the [Thanksgiving Classic](#). The [Detroit Lions](#) have hosted a game every Thanksgiving Day since 1934, with the exception of 1939–1944 (due to [World War II](#)).

For many [college football](#) teams, the regular season ends on Thanksgiving weekend, and a team's final game is often against a regional or historic rival. Most of these college games are played on the Friday or Saturday after Thanksgiving, but usually a single college game is played on Thanksgiving itself. The best-known Thanksgiving holiday weekend games include:

- [Ole Miss Rebels](#) vs. [Mississippi State Bulldogs](#) (the [Egg Bowl](#))
- [BYU Cougars](#) vs. [Utah Utes](#) (the [Holy War](#))
- [LSU Tigers](#) vs. [Arkansas Razorbacks](#) (the [Battle for the Golden Boot](#))
- [Georgia Bulldogs](#) vs. [Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets](#) ([Clean, Old-Fashioned Hate](#))
- [Clemson Tigers](#) vs. [South Carolina Gamecocks](#)
- [Colorado Buffaloes](#) vs. [Nebraska Cornhuskers](#)
- [Texas Longhorns](#) vs. [Texas A&M Aggies](#) (the [Lone Star Showdown](#))
- [Houston Cougars](#) vs. [Rice Owls](#) (the [Bayou Bucket](#))
- [Florida Gators](#) vs. [Florida State Seminoles](#) (the [Sunshine Showdown](#))
- [Pittsburgh Panthers](#) vs. [West Virginia Mountaineers](#) (the [Backyard Brawl](#))
- [Grambling State University](#) Tigers vs. [Southern University](#) Jaguars (the [Bayou Classic](#))
- [Alabama State University](#) Hornets vs. [Tuskegee University](#) Golden Tigers (the [Turkey Day Classic](#))
- [Oklahoma Sooners](#) vs. [Oklahoma State Cowboys](#) (the [Bedlam Series](#))
- [Auburn Tigers](#) vs. [Alabama Crimson Tide](#) (the [Iron Bowl](#))
- [Notre Dame Fighting Irish](#) vs. [USC Trojans](#) (The [Notre Dame-USC rivalry](#) game has taken place in almost every season since 1926, with the home team alternating from year to year. When USC hosts, the game takes place on Thanksgiving weekend; when Notre Dame hosts, the game typically occurs sometime in October.)

[High school football](#) games, and informal "Turkey Bowl" contests played by amateur groups and organizations, are frequently held on Thanksgiving weekend.

Other sports

In [college basketball](#), the annual [76 Classic](#) and [Old Spice Classic](#) tournaments take place over Thanksgiving weekend, with many of the games being played on Thanksgiving itself. Games are televised on [ESPN2](#) and [ESPNU](#) in [marathon](#) format. This is a relatively new "tradition," as these tournaments were founded in 2007 and 2006 respectively.

Though [golf](#) and [auto racing](#) are in their off-seasons on Thanksgiving, there are events in those sports that take place on Thanksgiving weekend. The [Turkey Night Grand Prix](#) is an annual automobile race that takes place at [Irwindale Speedway](#) on Thanksgiving night that draws some of the top racers in the United States. In golf, Thanksgiving weekend was the traditional time of the [Skins Game](#) from 1983 to 2008; the event was canceled in 2009 due to a lack of sponsorship and a difficulty in drawing star talent.^[31]

The world championship [pumpkin chunking](#) contest, held in early November in [Sussex County, Delaware](#), is televised on Thanksgiving on [Science Channel](#).

Television and radio

Main article: [List of Thanksgiving television specials](#)

While not as prolific as [Christmas specials](#), which usually begin right after Thanksgiving, there are many special television programs transmitted on or around Thanksgiving.

Most special programs are transmitted during [daytime](#) on Thanksgiving. [NBC](#) currently carries the *Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade* nationwide by official license from Macy's; NBC also carries the [National Dog Show](#) immediately after the Macy's Parade, followed by [Miracle on 34th Street](#). CBS carries unofficial coverage of the Macy's parade and an [NFL game](#); on odd-numbered years when CBS has the Dallas Cowboys game, the East Coast sees repeats of its [daytime programs](#) during the afternoons (on even-numbered when they have the Detroit Lions game, the West Coast programming is shuffled so that the extra time airs in late night hours). ABC has no daytime Thanksgiving specials; neither does [FOX](#), although Fox also carries an NFL game. In [syndication](#), [The Oprah Winfrey Show](#) carries its annual [Oprah's Favorite Things](#) some time around Thanksgiving, while syndicators will air Thanksgiving-themed episodes of [sitcom](#) reruns. [WGN America](#) carries the *McDonald's Thanksgiving Parade* and a special entitled *Bozo, Gar and Ray: WGN TV Classics*. Local television stations will occasionally preempt these programs in favor of local parades and events.

In [prime time](#), [ABC](#) currently airs [A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving](#) and "The Mayflower Voyagers" from [This is America, Charlie Brown](#); until 2005 and again in 2008, *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* aired on Thanksgiving night (though in 2006 and 2007, the network moved this to the Monday before so that they could compete head-to-head with CBS, who airs regularly scheduled programming, in a [ratings](#) war, as Thanksgiving lies within the November sweeps period). On Thanksgiving night, Fox usually carries a feature film; NBC's programming varies each year. Additionally, some series have over time featured Thanksgiving-themed episodes and specials, including [WKRP in Cincinnati](#)'s famous episode "Turkeys Away". Music specials by popular artists are popular in the days leading up to Thanksgiving and on Thanksgiving itself.

[Cable](#) stations usually carry [marathons](#) of their popular shows on Thanksgiving Day. The 1939 film version of [The Wizard of Oz](#) is often aired on Thanksgiving Day on Turner Broadcasting owned outlets (either [TBS](#) or [Turner Classic Movies](#)).

On the radio, the Friday before Thanksgiving has, in recent years, been the benchmark and standard date for [adult contemporary music](#) stations to switch over to full-time [Christmas music](#). There are a few Thanksgiving-themed specials and songs for various formats; many [classic rock](#) stations, for example, have a tradition of playing [Arlo Guthrie](#)'s 1967 song "[Alice's Restaurant](#)" on Thanksgiving, as the song's lyrics are about an event that takes place on the holiday, while many other stations will air [Adam Sandler](#)'s "[The Thanksgiving Song](#)." In [talk radio](#), [The Rush Limbaugh Show](#) has a tradition known as "The Real Story of Thanksgiving," in which Limbaugh argues (based upon texts such as [Of Plymouth Plantation](#)) that the early Puritans were [communalists](#) who, upon near starvation in the winter of 1621 with their system of common ownership of farm produce, switched to a [free enterprise](#) system and prospered. [Westwood One](#) carries all of the NFL Thanksgiving games, while the [Sports USA Radio Network](#) carries several of the Friday rivalry games.

Date

Since being fixed at the fourth Thursday in November by law in 1941, the holiday in the United States can occur on any date from November 22 to November 28. When it falls on November 22 or 23, it is not the last Thursday, but the penultimate Thursday in November. As it is a [Federal holiday](#), all United States government offices are closed and employees are paid for that day. It is also a holiday for the [New York Stock Exchange](#) and most other financial markets and financial services companies.

Thanksgiving dates, 2009–2014

- November 26, 2009
- November 25, 2010
- November 24, 2011
- November 22, 2012
- November 28, 2013
- November 27, 2014

Friday after Thanksgiving

The Friday after Thanksgiving, although not a Federal holiday, is a holiday for many companies, except for those in retail. It is also a day off for most schools. It is popularly known as [Black Friday](#), so-called because of the heavy shopping traffic on that day. Another reason for the term 'Black Friday' is that many stores reach sales numbers that take them out of the red and (hopefully) keep them in the black for the rest of the fiscal year. Black Friday is considered^[*by whom?*] to be the start of the Christmas shopping season.

Literature

Poetry

- [Thanksgiving](#), by Florence Earle Coates
- [Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 28, 1986](#), by William S. Burroughs

See also

- [List of Harvest Festivals](#)
- [Thanksgiving \(Canada\)](#)
- [Turkey Trot](#)
- [Turkey bowling](#)
- [Thanks-Giving Square](#)
- [Unthanksgiving day](#)
- [Occupation of Alcatraz](#)

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27. [^](#) [\[2\]](#)
28. [^](#) [Giving Thanks and Saying Grace](#)
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31. [^](#) [Skins Game to take year off due to economy](#). Associated Press. 8 May 2009.

External links

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- [Thanksgiving](#) at the [Open Directory Project](#)
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Thanksgiving (Canada)

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For Thanksgiving in other countries, see [Thanksgiving](#).

Thanksgiving



Shopping for pumpkins for Thanksgiving in [Ottawa's](#)
Byward Market

Observed by [Canada](#)

Type Cultural

Significance A celebration of being thankful for what one has and the bounty of the previous year.

Date Second Monday in October

2009 date [October 12](#)

Celebrations Spending Time with Family, [feasting](#),
religious practice

Thanksgiving, or **Thanksgiving Day** ([Canadian French](#): *Jour de l'Action de grâce*), occurring on the second Monday in October, is an annual Canadian [holiday](#) to [give thanks](#) at the close of the harvest season. Although the original act of Parliament references [God](#) and the holiday is celebrated in churches, the holiday is also celebrated in a [secular](#) manner.

On January 31, 1957, the Canadian Parliament proclaimed:

“ A Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed ... to be observed on the 2nd Monday in October. ”

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[edit] Traditional celebration

Thanksgiving is a [statutory holiday](#) in most jurisdictions of Canada, with the provinces of [Prince Edward Island](#), [Newfoundland and Labrador](#), and [Nova Scotia](#) being the exceptions. Where a company is regulated by the [federal government](#) (such as those in the telecommunications and banking sectors), it is recognized regardless of status provincially.^{[1][2][3][4][5]}

As a liturgical festival, Thanksgiving corresponds to the English and continental European [Harvest festival](#), with churches decorated with [cornucopias](#), [pumpkins](#), corn, wheat sheaves, and other harvest bounty, English and European harvest hymns sung on the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend and scriptural selections drawn from biblical stories relating to the Jewish harvest festival of [Sukkot](#).^[*citation needed*]

While the actual Thanksgiving holiday is on a Monday, Canadians might eat their Thanksgiving meal on any day of the three-day weekend, though Sunday and Monday are the most common. While Thanksgiving is usually celebrated with a large family meal, it is also often a time for weekend getaways.

Canada's top professional football league, the [Canadian Football League](#), holds a nationally televised [doubleheader](#) known as the "Thanksgiving Day Classic." It is one of two weeks in which the league plays on Monday afternoons, the other being the [Labour Day Classic](#). Unlike the Labour Day games, the teams that play on the Thanksgiving Day Classic rotate each year.

Unlike the American counterpart, Thanksgiving parades are not common in Canada; in fact, there is only one that coincides with the holiday. That parade, known as the [Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest](#) Parade, gets significant national attention as a result and is broadcast nationwide on [CTV](#) and [A](#).

[edit] History of Thanksgiving in Canada

Various [First Nations](#) in Canada had long-standing traditions celebrating the harvest and giving thanks for a successful bounty of crops. Canada's First Nations and Native Americans throughout the Americas, including the [Pueblo](#), [Cherokee](#), [Cree](#) and many others organized harvest festivals, ceremonial dances, and other celebrations of thanks for centuries before the arrival of Europeans in North America.^[6]



Canadian troops attend a Thanksgiving service in the bombed-out [Cambrai Cathedral](#), in France in October 1918

The history of Thanksgiving in Canada goes back to an explorer, [Martin Frobisher](#), who had been trying to find a northern passage to the [Pacific Ocean](#).^{*[citation needed]*} Frobisher's Thanksgiving was not for harvest but homecoming. He had safely returned from a search for the [Northwest Passage](#), avoiding the later fate of [Henry Hudson](#) and Sir [John Franklin](#). In the year 1578, he held a formal ceremony, in what is now the province of [Newfoundland and Labrador](#), to give thanks for surviving the long journey. The feast was one of the first Thanksgiving celebrations by Europeans in North America. Frobisher was later knighted and had an inlet of the Atlantic Ocean in northern Canada named after him — [Frobisher Bay](#).

At the same time, [French settlers](#), having crossed the ocean and arrived in Canada with explorer [Samuel de Champlain](#), in 1604 onwards also held huge feasts of thanks. They even formed 'The [Order of Good Cheer](#)' and gladly shared their food with their First Nations neighbours.

After the [Seven Years' War](#) ended in 1763 handing over of [New France](#) to the British, the citizens of [Halifax](#) held a special day of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving days were observed beginning in 1799 but did not occur every year. After the [American Revolution](#), American refugees who [remained loyal](#) to [Great Britain](#) moved from the newly independent United States and came to Canada. They brought the customs and practices of the American Thanksgiving to Canada. The first Thanksgiving Day after [Canadian Confederation](#) was observed as a [civic holiday](#) on April 5, 1872 to celebrate the recovery of the [Prince of Wales](#) (later King [Edward VII](#)) from a serious illness.

Starting in 1879 Thanksgiving Day was observed every year, but the date was proclaimed annually and changed year to year.^{*[citation needed]*} The theme of the Thanksgiving holiday also changed each year to reflect an important event to be thankful for. In its early years it was for an abundant harvest and occasionally for a special anniversary.

After [World War I](#), both [Armistice Day](#) and Thanksgiving were celebrated on the Monday of the week in which November 11 occurred.^{*[citation needed]*} Ten years later, in 1931, the two days became separate holidays, and Armistice Day was renamed [Remembrance Day](#).

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Thanksgiving

History in the United States	Pilgrims • Native American • Samoset • Squanto • Wampanoag • Plymouth • National Thanksgiving Proclamation • "Franksgiving" • National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation • National Day of Mourning
History in Canada	Martin Frobisher • Newfoundland and Labrador • Samuel de Champlain • Halifax
Traditions	Thanksgiving dinner • World's Largest Disco
Parades	Macy's (New York City) • America's (Detroit) • 6abc-IKEA (Philadelphia) • McDonald's (Chicago) • Carolinas (Charlotte) • Holidazzle (Minneapolis) • Celebrate the Season (Pittsburgh) • Hollywood X-Mas (Los Angeles) • K-W Oktoberfest (Kitchener-Waterloo)
Songs	"Over the River and through the Woods" • "We Gather Together" • "Alice's Restaurant" • "The Thanksgiving Song"
Society	Columbus Day • Black Friday (shopping) • Cyber Monday • List of harvest festivals • Buy Nothing Day



Sports
events

[American football](#) • [Thanksgiving Classic](#) • [Turkey Trot](#) • [Turkey bowling](#) • [Turkey Night Grand Prix](#) • [Old Spice Classic](#) • [76 Classic](#) • [Punkin' Chunkin'](#)

Television
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Thanksgiving dinner

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A traditional Thanksgiving dinner

The centerpiece of contemporary [Thanksgiving](#) in the [United States](#) and [Canada](#) is a large meal, generally centered around a large roasted [turkey](#). The majority of the dishes in the traditional American version of Thanksgiving dinner are made from [foods native to the New World](#), as according to tradition the Pilgrims received these foods from the Native Americans. However, many of the classic traditions attributed to the first Thanksgiving are actually myths introduced later.^[1]

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[\[edit\]](#) Historical Menus

The use of the turkey in the USA for Thanksgiving precedes Lincoln's nationalization of the holiday in 1863. Alexander Hamilton proclaimed that no "Citizen of the United States should refrain from turkey on Thanksgiving Day," but turkey was uncommon as Thanksgiving fare until after 1800. By 1857, turkey had become part of the traditional dinner in New England.^[2]



Men eating a Thanksgiving dinner during World War I

A Thanksgiving Day dinner served to the [Civilian Conservation Corps](#) in 1935 included: Pickles, green olives, celery, roast turkey, oyster stew, cranberry sauce, giblet gravy, dressing, creamed asparagus tips, snowflake potatoes, baked carrots, hot rolls, fruit salad, mince meat pie, fruit cake, candies, grapes, apples, French drip coffee, cigars and cigarettes.^[3]

[\[edit\]](#) Customs

Formally a Thanksgiving dinner in the United States bears a good deal of resemblance to another merry feast served at [Christmas](#): the centerpiece at both is most often a turkey. However, the spirits of these occasions are usually different: the family and friends present at a Thanksgiving table are not expected to give gifts to each other, for example, and the point of the meal is to reflect upon and be thankful for the things that have passed over the last year as well as reconnect with the people one holds close.^[*citation needed*]



 Thanksgiving dinner

[\[edit\]](#) Turkey

Because turkey is the most common main dish of a Thanksgiving dinner, Thanksgiving is sometimes colloquially called “turkey day.” In 2006, American turkey growers were expected to raise 270 million turkeys, to be processed into five billion pounds of turkey meat valued at almost \$8 billion, with one third of all turkey consumption occurring in the Thanksgiving-Christmas season, and a per capita consumption of almost 18 pounds.^[4] [\[2\]](#) [\[3\]](#) [\[4\]](#) [\[5\]](#) [\[6\]](#) [\[7\]](#) Most Thanksgiving turkeys are stuffed with a bread-based [stuffing](#) and roasted. [Sage](#) is the traditional herb added to the stuffing (also called dressing), along with chopped celery, carrots, and onions. [Deep-fried](#) turkey is rising in popularity, requiring special [fryers](#) to hold the large bird, and reportedly leading to fires and bad burns for those who fail to take care when dealing with a large quantity of very hot oil. In more recent years it is also true that as the wild population of turkeys has rebounded in most of the US, some will hunt and dress their turkey in the woods and then freeze it until meal preparation.^[citation needed]

[\[edit\]](#) Alternatives to turkey

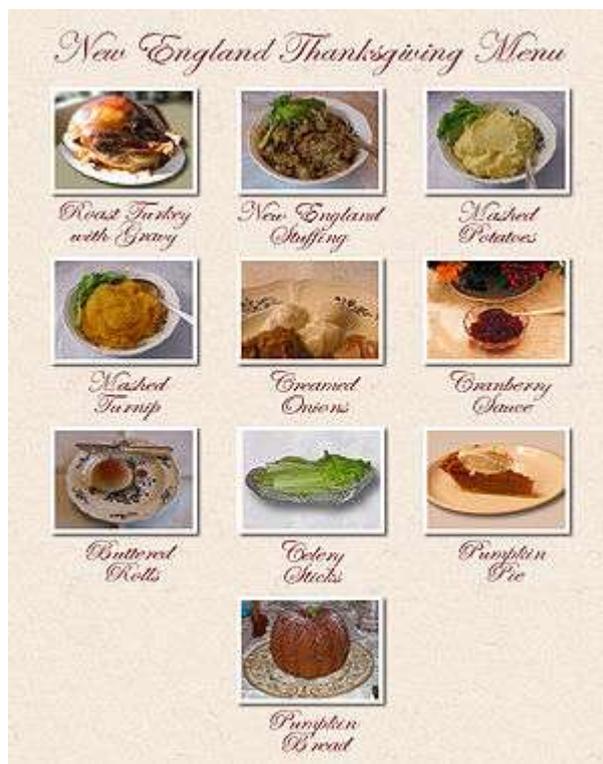
Non-traditional foods other than turkey are sometimes served as the main dish for a Thanksgiving dinner. [Goose](#) and [duck](#), foods which were traditional European centerpieces of [Christmas](#) dinners before being displaced, are now sometimes served in place of the Thanksgiving turkey. Sometimes, fowl native to the region where the meal is taking place is used; for example, an article in *Texas Monthly* magazine suggested [quail](#) as the main dish for a Texan Thanksgiving feast. In a few areas of the [West Coast of the United States](#), [Dungeness crab](#) is common as an alternate main dish, as crab season starts in early November. Sometimes a variant recipe for cooking turkey is used; for example, a [Chinese recipe](#) for [goose](#) could be used on the similarly-sized American bird. [Vegetarians](#) or [vegans](#) may try [tofurkey](#), a [tofu](#)-based dish with imitation turkey flavor. In [Alaskan](#) villages, [whale](#) meat is sometimes eaten.^[8] [Irish](#) immigrants have been known to have [prime rib](#) of [beef](#) as their centerpiece as beef was once a rarity back in Ireland; in the past, families would save up money for this as a special sign of newfound prosperity and hope. In the United States, a new globalist approach to Thanksgiving has become popular due to the impact of massive immigration on the country. Some take the basic Thanksgiving ingredients, and reinvent them using flavors, techniques, and traditions from their own cuisines, while others celebrate the holiday with a large festive meal with or without turkey ^[5].

Given the working holiday it is also common for immigrant communities in North America to participate in the holiday by launching their own celebrations of the holiday. Thus, it is not uncommon to find Chinese, Indian, and other large immigrant communities celebrating Thanksgiving in the same family spirit but with the food of the feast being of their own respective cultures instead. ^{[6][7][8]}

[edit] Side dishes

Many other foods are served alongside the main dish—so many that, because of the amount of food, the Thanksgiving meal is sometimes served midday or early afternoon to make time for all the eating, and preparation may begin at dawn or on days prior.

Traditional Thanksgiving foods are sometimes specific to the day, and although some of the foods might be seen at any semi-formal meal in the United States, the meal often has something of a ritual or traditional quality. Many Americans would say it is "incomplete" without [cranberry sauce](#); [stuffing](#) or dressing; and [gravy](#). Other commonly served dishes include [winter squash](#); [sweet potatoes](#); [mashed potatoes](#) or rice (in the South and among Asians); dumplings; [corn on the cob](#) or [hominy](#); deviled eggs; [green beans](#) or [green bean casserole](#); sauerkraut (among those in the Mid-Atlantic; especially Baltimore), peas and carrots, bread [rolls](#), [cornbread](#) (in the south and parts of New England), or biscuits, rutabagas or turnips; and a [salad](#). For dessert, various [pies](#) are often served, particularly [apple pie](#), [mincemeat pie](#), [sweet potato pie](#), [pumpkin pie](#), chocolate meringue pie and [pecan pie](#), with the last four being particularly American.



There are also non-traditional regional differences as to the stuffing or dressing traditionally served with the turkey. Southerners generally make their dressing from [cornbread](#), while those in other parts of the country make stuffing from white or wheat [bread](#) as the base. One or several of the following may be added to the dressing/stuffing: [oysters](#), [apples](#), [chestnuts](#), [raisins](#), [celery](#) and/or other vegetables, [sausages](#) or the turkey's [giblets](#). The traditional

Canadian version has bread cubes, sage, onion and celery. Rice is also sometimes used instead of bread in Canada^{[[citation needed](#)]}.

Other non-traditional dishes reflect the region or cultural background of those who have come together for the meal. For example, many [African Americans](#) and [Southerners](#) serve baked [macaroni and cheese](#) and [collard greens](#), while some [Italian-Americans](#) often have [lasagne](#) on the table and [Ashkenazi Jews](#) may serve noodle [kugel](#), a sweet dessert [pudding](#). It is not unheard of for [Mexican Americans](#) to serve their turkey with [mole](#) and roasted [corn](#). In [Puerto Rico](#), the Thanksgiving meal is completed with arroz con gandules ([Rice](#) with [pigeon peas](#)), pumpkin [flan](#), [potato salad](#), roasted white [sweet potatoes](#) and Spanish sparkling [hard cider](#). Cuban-Americans traditionally serve the Turkey alongside a small Roasted Pork and include White Rice and Black Beans or Kidney Beans. Vegetarians or vegans have been known to serve alternative entree centerpieces such as a large vegetable pie or a stuffed and baked [pumpkin](#) or [tofurkey](#). Many Midwesterners (such as [Minnesotans](#)) of [Norwegian](#) or [Scandinavian](#) descent set the table with [lefse](#) and [green bean hotdish](#).^{[[citation needed](#)]}

[[edit](#)] Beverages

The beverages at Thanksgiving can vary as much as the side dishes, often depending on who is present at the table and their tastes. [Spirits](#) or [cocktails](#) occasionally may be served before the main meal. On the dinner table, unfermented [Apple cider](#) (still or sparkling) and/or [wine](#) are often served. [Beaujolais nouveau](#) is sometimes served, as "Beaujolais day" falls before American Thanksgiving. For children non-alcoholic beverages are served at the table as it is generally frowned upon (and often illegal) for those below the [legal drinking age](#) to consume alcohol, though in some states it is legal for those under 21 to consume alcohol when their parents are present. Pitchers of sweetened iced tea are common throughout the South.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

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Sports events	American football • Thanksgiving Classic • Turkey Trot • Turkey bowling • Turkey Night Grand Prix • Old Spice Classic • 76 Classic • Punkin' Chunkin'
Television specials	A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving • National Dog Show • Oprah's Favorite Things



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Domestic turkey

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Main article: [Turkey \(bird\)](#)

Domesticated turkey



A [Broad Breasted Bronze](#) tom displaying

[Conservation status](#)

Domesticated

[Scientific classification](#)

Kingdom: [Animalia](#)
Phylum: [Chordata](#)
Class: [Aves](#)
Order: [Galliformes](#)
Family: [Meleagrididae](#)
Genus: *Meleagris*
Species: *M. gallopavo*

[Binomial name](#)

[*Meleagris gallopavo*](#)
([Linnaeus](#), 1758)

The **domesticated turkey** is a large [poultry bird](#). The modern domesticated turkey descends from the [wild turkey](#) (*Meleagris gallopavo*), one of the two species of [turkey](#) (genus *Meleagris*); in the past the [ocellated turkey](#) (*Meleagris ocellata*) was also domesticated.

The turkey is raised throughout temperate parts of the world and is a popular form of poultry, partially because industrialized farming has made it very cheap for the amount of meat it produces. The female domesticated turkey is referred to as a *hen* and the chick as a *poult*. In the United States, the male is referred to as a *tom*, while in Europe, the male is a *stag*. The [average lifespan](#) for a domesticated turkey is ten years.

The great majority of domesticated turkeys are bred to have white feathers because their [pin feathers](#) are less visible when the carcass is dressed, although brown or bronze-feathered varieties are also raised. The fleshy protuberance atop the beak is the [snood](#) and the one attached to the underside of the beak is known as a [wattle](#).

Despite the name, turkeys have no direct relation to the country of [Turkey](#) and are native to North America; see further under [Turkey \(bird\): History and naming](#).

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[\[edit\]](#) History



Turkeys

The modern domesticated turkey is descended from one of six [subspecies](#) of [Wild Turkey](#), *[Meleagris gallopavo gallopavo](#)*,^[1] ancient Mesoamericans having chosen to domesticate this [taxon](#). [The Aztecs](#) domesticated the turkey ([Mexican Spanish](#) *guajolote*, from [Nahuatl](#) *huexolotl*) and used it as a major source of protein (meat and eggs), and also employed its feathers extensively for decorative purposes, as did many other [Mesoamerican](#) cultures. The turkey was associated with their [trickster god Tezcatlipoca](#),^[2] perhaps because of its humorous behavior. There is also evidence that it is possible the [Hopi Indians](#) may have domesticated the turkey even before the Aztecs.

Turkeys were taken to Europe by the Spanish, who had found them as a favorite domesticated animal among the [Aztecs](#) and other Mesoamerican peoples. After being introduced to Europe, many distinct turkey breeds were developed (e.g. [Spanish Black](#), [Royal Palm](#)). In the early 20th century, many advances were made in the [breeding](#) of turkeys, resulting in varieties such as the Beltsville Small White.

[\[edit\]](#) Availability and commercial production



A young turkey is called a poulting.

Prior to [World War II](#), turkey was something of a luxury in the United Kingdom, with [goose](#) or [beef](#) a more common [Christmas](#) dinner (In [Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol](#), [Bob Cratchit](#) had a goose before [Scrooge](#) bought him a turkey).

Turkey production in the United Kingdom was centered in [East Anglia](#), using two breeds, the [Norfolk Black](#) and the Norfolk [Bronze](#) (also known as Cambridge Bronze). These would be driven as flocks, after shoeing, down to markets in London from the 17th century onwards - the breeds having arrived in the early 16th century via Spain (1500).^[3]

[Intensive farming](#) of turkeys from the late 1940s dramatically cut the price, and it became the most common [Christmas dinner](#) meat. With the availability of refrigeration, whole turkeys could be shipped frozen to distant markets. Later advances in disease control increased production even more. Advances in shipping, changing consumer preferences and the proliferation of commercial poultry plants has made fresh turkey inexpensive as well as readily available.

In commercial production, breeder farms supply eggs to hatcheries. After 28 days, the hatched poultings are sexed and delivered to the grow-out farms; hens are raised separately from toms because of different growth rates. Rations generally include corn and soybean meal, with added vitamins and minerals, and is adjusted for protein, carbohydrate and fat based on the age and nutrient requirements. Hens are killed (or harvested as turkey breeders say) at about 14 weeks and toms at about 18 weeks.

The dominant commercial breed is the Broad-breasted Whites (similar to "White Holland", but a separate breed), which have been selected for size and amount of meat. Mature toms are too large to achieve natural fertilization without injuring the hens, so their semen is collected, and hens are inseminated artificially. Several hens can be inseminated from each collection, so fewer toms are needed. Breeders' meat is too tough for roasting, and is mostly used to make processed meats.

In the UK [Bernard Matthews](#) is a large producer of turkeys. Cargill, Butterball and [Jennie-O](#) (Hormel) are large producers in the US.

[\[edit\]](#) Waste products

Approximately two to four billion pounds of poultry feathers are produced every year by the poultry industry. Most are ground into a protein source for ruminant animal feed, as the

protein (keratin) is undigestible for monogastrics. Researchers at the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) have patented a method of removing the stiff [quill](#) from the fibers which make up the feather. As this is a potential supply of natural fibers, research has been conducted at [Philadelphia University](#)'s School of Engineering and Textiles to determine textile applications for feather fibers. Turkey feather fibers have been blended with nylon and spun into [yarn](#), and then used for [knitting](#). The yarns were tested for strength while the fabrics were evaluated as insulation materials. In the case of the yarns, as the percentage of turkey feather fibers increased, the strength decreased. In fabric form, as the percentage of turkey feather fibers increased, the heat retention capability of the fabric increased.^{[[citation needed](#)]}

[\[edit\]](#) Intelligence

Turkeys are popularly believed to be unintelligent, with claims made that during a rain storm turkeys will look up until they drown. Despite this image, the turkey is no more or less intelligent than a comparable animal,^[4] and while the birds will look at the sky for up to a minute during a rain storm, this is due to a genetic nervous disorder known as [tetanic torticollar spasms](#).^[4] Other jests include that it is clumsy and too stupid to realize it can't fly, but both traits are due to modern breeding that makes turkeys much heavier than their wild relatives.^[4]

[\[edit\]](#) Turkey breeds

Main article: [List of turkey breeds](#)

See also: [Heritage turkey](#)

- The [Broad-breasted White](#) is the commercial turkey of choice for large scale industrial turkey farms, and consequently is the most consumed variety of the bird. Usually the turkey to receive a "[presidential pardon](#)", a US custom, is a Broad breasted White.
- The [Broad-breasted Bronze](#) is another commercially developed strain of table bird.
- The [Standard Bronze](#) looks much like the broad-breasted, except that it is single breasted, and can naturally breed.
- The [Bourbon Red](#) turkey is a smaller non-commercial breed with dark reddish feathers with white markings.
- [Slate](#), or Blue Slate, turkeys are a very rare breed with beautiful gray-blue feathers.
- The [Black](#) ("Spanish Black", "[Norfolk](#) Black") has very dark plumage with a green sheen.
- The [Narragansett Turkey](#) is a popular heritage breed named after Narragansett Bay in New England.
- The [Chocolate](#) is a rarer heritage breed with markings similar to a Black Spanish, but light brown instead of black in color. Common in the Southern U.S. and France before the Civil War.
- The [Beltsville Small White](#) is a small heritage breed, which development started in 1934. The breed was introduced in 1941 and was admitted to the APA Standard in 1951. Although slightly bigger and broader than the Midget White, both are often mislabeled.
- The [Midget White](#) is a smaller heritage breed, developed in Massachusetts in the 1950s, sometimes called Beltsville Whites.

[\[edit\]](#) Turkeys as food

Turkey breast meat

Nutritional value per 100 g (3.5 oz)

Energy	100 kcal	440 kJ
Carbohydrates		4.21 g
- Sugars	3.51 g	
- Dietary fiber	0.5 g	
Fat		1.66 g
Protein		17.07 g
Thiamine (Vit. B1)	0.130 mg	10%
Riboflavin (Vit. B2)	0.320 mg	21%
Niacin (Vit. B3)	0.110 mg	1%
Pantothenic acid (B5)	0.166 mg	3%
Vitamin B6	0.128 mg	10%
Folate (Vit. B9)	4 µg	1%
Vitamin C	5.7 mg	10%
Calcium	8 mg	1%
Iron	1.44 mg	12%
Magnesium	21 mg	6%
Phosphorus	162 mg	23%
Potassium	302 mg	6%
Zinc	1.33 mg	13%

Percentages are relative to US [recommendations](#) for adults.
Source: [USDA Nutrient database](#)

Turkeys are traditionally eaten as the main course of [Christmas](#) feasts in much of the world ([stuffed turkey](#)), as well as [Thanksgiving](#) in the United States and Canada, though this tradition has its origins in modern times, rather than colonial as is often supposed. Before the 20th century, pork ribs were the most common food on the holiday, as the animals were usually slaughtered in November. Turkeys were once so abundant in the wild that they were eaten throughout the year, the food considered commonplace, whereas pork ribs were rarely available outside of the Thanksgiving-New Year season.^[5] It has also displaced, to a certain extent, the traditional Christmas roast [goose](#) or [beef](#) of the United Kingdom and Europe. While eating turkey was once mainly restricted to special occasions such as these, turkey is now eaten year-round and forms a regular part of many diets.

Turkeys are sold sliced and ground, as well as "whole" in a manner similar to [chicken](#) with the head, feet, and feathers removed. Frozen whole turkeys remain popular. Sliced turkey is frequently used as a [sandwich](#) meat or served as [cold cuts](#); in some cases where recipes call

for chicken it can be used as a substitute. Ground turkey is sold just as ground beef, and is frequently marketed as a healthy beef substitute. Without careful preparation, cooked turkey is usually considered to end up less moist than other poultry meats such as [chicken](#) or [duck](#). Leftovers from roast turkey are generally served as [cold cuts](#) on [Boxing Day](#) in Canada.



A roast turkey as part of a traditional U.S. [Thanksgiving](#) meal.

Wild turkeys, while technically the same species as domesticated turkeys, have a very different taste from farm-raised turkeys. Almost all of the meat is "dark" (even the breast) with a more intense flavor. The flavor can also vary seasonally with changes in available forage, often leaving wild turkey meat with a gamier flavor in late summer due to the greater number of insects in its diet over the preceding months. Wild turkey that has fed predominantly on grass and grain has a milder flavor. Older heritage breeds also differ in flavor. ^{[[citation needed](#)]}

A large amount of turkey meat is processed. It can be smoked and as such is sometimes sold as [turkey ham](#). Twisted [helices](#) of deep fried turkey meat, sold as "turkey twizzlers," came to prominence in the UK in 2004 when chef [Jamie Oliver](#) campaigned to have them and similar foods removed from [school dinners](#).

[\[edit\]](#) **Cooking**

 [Wikibooks Cookbook](#) has a recipe/module on [turkey](#)

Both fresh and frozen turkeys are used for cooking; as with most foods, fresh turkeys are generally preferred, although they cost more. Around [holiday](#) seasons, high demand for fresh turkeys often makes them difficult to purchase without ordering in advance. For the frozen variety, the large size of the turkeys typically used for consumption makes defrosting them a major endeavor: a typically-sized turkey will take several days to properly defrost.

Turkeys are usually [baked](#) or [roasted](#) in an oven for several hours, often while the cook prepares the remainder of the meal. Sometimes, a turkey is [brined](#) before roasting to enhance flavor and moisture content. This is necessary because the dark meat requires a higher temperature to denature all of the myoglobin pigment than the white meat (very low in myoglobin), so that fully cooking the dark meat tends to dry out the breast. Brining makes it possible to fully cook the dark meat without drying the breast meat. Turkeys are sometimes decorated with [turkey frills](#) prior to serving.

In some areas, particularly the [American South](#), they may also be [deep fried](#) in hot oil (often [peanut oil](#)) for 30 to 45 minutes by using a [turkey fryer](#). Deep frying turkey has become something of a fad, with hazardous consequences for those unprepared to safely handle the large quantities of hot oil required.^[6]

[\[edit\]](#) Nutritional value

The white meat of turkey is generally considered [healthier](#) than dark meat because of its lower fat content, but the nutritional differences are small. And although turkey is reputed to cause sleepiness, holiday dinners are commonly large meals served with carbohydrates, fats, and alcohol in a relaxed atmosphere, all of which are bigger contributors to post-meal sleepiness than the [tryptophan](#) in turkey.^{[7][8]}

[\[edit\]](#) Accompaniments

 [Wikibooks Cookbook](#) has a recipe/module on [American-style Thanksgiving turkey](#)



 Roast turkey served with salad, sauces and sparkling juice. On the left is a [log cake](#).

When eaten at [Christmas](#) in the United Kingdom, turkey is traditionally served with winter vegetables including roast [potatoes](#), [Brussels sprouts](#) and [parsnips](#). [Cranberry](#) sauce is the traditional condiment in the northern rural areas of the United Kingdom where wild cranberries grow. In the south and in urban areas, where cranberries until recently were difficult to obtain, [bread sauce](#) was used in its place, but the availability of commercial [cranberry](#) sauce has seen a rise in its popularity in these areas too. Sometimes sausage meat, [cocktail sausages](#) or [liver](#) wrapped in bacon is also served (known as bacon rolls or "[pigs in blankets](#)").

Especially during holiday seasons, [stuffing](#), also known as dressing, is traditionally served with turkey. There are many varieties: [oatmeal](#), [chestnut](#), [sage](#) and [onion](#) (flavored bread), cornbread, and [sausage](#) are the most traditional. Stuffing may either be used to stuff the turkey (as the name implies), or may be cooked separately and served as a side dish.

For [Thanksgiving](#) in the United States and Canada, turkey is typically served stuffed or with dressing (on the side), with [cranberry](#) sauce and [gravy](#). Common complementary dishes include mashed potatoes, corn, green beans, [squash](#), and [sweet potatoes](#). Pie is the usual dessert, [pumpkin](#) being most traditional, [apple](#) or [pecan](#) also being popular.

Turkey is sometimes used as a substitute for other meats for foods like [turkey bacon](#) and turkey [hot dogs](#).

[[edit](#)] Turkey litter for fuel

Although most commonly used as fertilizer, Turkey litter (droppings mixed with bedding material, usually wood chips) is being used as a fuel source in electric power plants. One such plant in western Minnesota provides 55 megawatts of power using 700,000 tons of dung per year. The plant began operating in 2007.^[9]

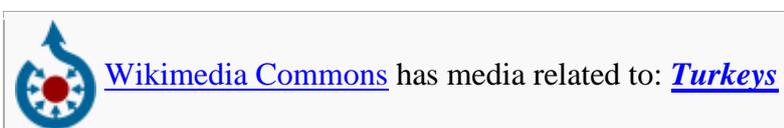
[[edit](#)] See also

- [List of names for the Wild Turkey](#)
- [National Turkey Federation](#)
- [American Poultry Association](#)
- [Turkey bowling](#)

[[edit](#)] Footnotes

- ↑ C. Michael Hogan. 2008. *Wild turkey: Meleagris gallopavo*. GlobalTwitcher.com, ed. N. Stromberg
- ↑ "[Ancient North & Central American History of the Wild Turkey](#)". Wildturkeyzone.com. <http://www.wildturkeyzone.com/wildturkey/species.htm>. Retrieved 2007-12-21.
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- ↑ "[Turkey-Manure Power Plant Raises Stink with Environmentalists](#)". *International Herald Tribune iht.com*. <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/06/06/europe/manure.php?page=1>. Retrieved November 15 2007.

[[edit](#)] External links



- [Turkey Recipes, Preparation and Cooking Tips](#) from EatTurkey.com
- [How to cook the perfect turkey.](#)
- [stuffed Christmas turkey.](#)
- [More information on turkeys](#) from Cornell
- [Breeds of turkey](#) from Feathersite.com
- [WhenWillMyTurkeyBeDone.com](#) Estimates time to roast turkeys and other meats based on measured progress.

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Sports events	American football • Thanksgiving Classic • Turkey Trot • Turkey bowling • Turkey Night Grand Prix • Old Spice Classic • 76 Classic • Punkin' Chunkin'
Television specials	A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving • National Dog Show • Oprah's Favorite Things



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3. [Thanksgiving \(United States\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

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Für die großen Drei, Nintendo, Sony und Microsoft, war die Woche um das amerikanische Erntedankfest *Thanksgiving* auch in diesem Jahr ein Erfolg. ... [Eurogamer.de](#) - [9 weitere Artikel](#) »

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[Thanksgiving Recipes ~ Chris Pirillo](#) - Chris Pirillo - Vor 4 Tagen

6. [About the USA - Feiertage > Thanksgiving](#)

Thanksgiving, das amerikanische Erntedankfest, wird immer am vierten Donnerstag im November gefeiert. Viele Amerikaner nehmen sich auch den darauffolgenden ...

usa.usembassy.de/feiertage-thanksgiving.htm - [Im Cache](#) - [Ähnlich](#)

7. [USA kulinarisch - Geschichte und Brauchtum des Thanksgiving-Tages](#)

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8. [The History of Thanksgiving - History.com - History, Facts ...](#)

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Discover the humble origins of *Thanksgiving* holiday traditions with facts, pictures, the pilgrims first menu, videos and much more from History.com.
www.history.com/content/thanksgiving - [Im Cache](#) - [Ähnlich](#)

9. [THANKSGIVING](#)

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10. [Thanksgiving on the Net - Welcome to a Celebration of Thanksgiving ...](#)

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A good *Thanksgiving* site, with a few good selected links to other *Thanksgiving* sites. You can also send *Thanksgiving* cards from this site.
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11. [The First Thanksgiving Student Activities for Grades PreK-12 ...](#)

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12. [Video-Ergebnisse zu Thanksgiving](#)

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