

## Things You Might Not Know About Thanksgiving

When most of us think about Thanksgiving, the image that pops into our head is likely one of a large family all sitting down around a table to eat turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, cranberries and a plethora of other savory foods. What you might not know is that there wasn't even a turkey at the first Thanksgiving feast! The pilgrims and the Wampanoag Indians, who had helped the Pilgrims make it through their first winter in Plymouth, were much more likely to have duck or waterfowl as their main dish, seeing as how any meat served at the feast would have to have been hunted by the pilgrims themselves, and duck and waterfowl were the most prevalent food sources in Plymouth at the time. Also, mashed potatoes and cranberry sauce were still many years coming – the side dishes the diners likely enjoyed were seafood, cabbage, onions, corn and squash. How would you like to serve up some shrimp and crab next to your turkey this year?!?

Also, the first Thanksgiving feast was not one huge meal eaten at the same time – the first Thanksgiving actually lasted a whole week! Many of the Wampanoag had a two-day walk from their villages to get to the feast, so the idea of staying only for a two-hour meal and then headed home seemed ridiculous! The first feast was more of a festival – Pilgrim children and Wampanoag children played together while the adults sang, danced and had shooting contests. This first Thanksgiving feast set the stage for the now HUGELY popular feast that's celebrated all over the United States today!

Things you may not know about contemporary Thanksgiving...

- 1) Close to 280 million turkeys are sold for Thanksgiving every year!
- 2) About 50 % of Americans put their stuffing *in* the turkey, while the other 50% choose to cook it on the side.
- 3) 91% of Americans eat turkey on Thanksgiving Day.
- 4) 20% of all cranberries consumed in the US every year are eaten on Thanksgiving alone!
- 5) Over 40 million green bean casseroles are served every year on Thanksgiving – that's a lot of green beans!
- 6) The Guinness Book of Records states that the greatest dressed weight recorded for a turkey is 39.09 kg (86 lbs), at the annual "heaviest turkey" competition held in London, England on December 12, 1989.
- 7) There are three places in the United States named after the holiday's traditional main course — Turkey, Texas; Turkey Creek, La.; and Turkey, N.C. There are also nine townships around the country named "Turkey," with three in Kansas.
- 8) Thanksgiving was first declared a National Day in 1789 by George Washington.
- 9) Sarah Joseph Hale helped the cause for Thanksgiving being a nationally celebrated day by posting ads in periodicals. Her idea finally became a reality when President Abraham Lincoln administered a proclamation in 1863 that Thanksgiving would be celebrated on the last Thursday in November.
- 10) After Abraham Lincoln's proclamation, every president protected the national day, but many changed the times. The latest change was by Franklin Roosevelt, who moved Thanksgiving to the second to last Thursday in order to create a longer Christmas shopping season. Citizens disagreed however, and the date was changed back two years later.

-- Bruce H. Kubec