

# Thanksgiving Traditions

(November 2017)

Thanksgiving is a public holiday observed throughout the United States. Since 1879, it has been celebrated on and off throughout the nation. Today, Thanksgiving is associated with eating a large meal, spending time with family and friends, watching or playing football, and of course, parades. Each family seems to make its own special traditions as well, some more typical than others. Here are a few of the more widespread customs associated with America's Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving is one of the busiest travel times of the year. People who live far from their loved ones get on a plane, or train or into their automobiles to travel as far as it takes to celebrate with their clan. Lines at airports and bus stations are long, and traffic is jammed up just about everywhere. But sitting down to a warm and delicious meal with folks whose company you enjoy can certainly make it a little more bearable.

The meal is one of the most important parts of Thanksgiving! There are particular dishes you'll find on most tables at Thanksgiving, including a roasted turkey, stuffing, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, corn, biscuits, cranberry sauce, and gravy. Pies are a very popular and tasty way to end the Thanksgiving meal. Some all-time favorite pie flavors include apple, pumpkin, pecan, and sweet potato.

Some Thanksgiving traditions are slowly changing or evolving. One of them has to do with the feast. There are some families who choose to serve vegetarian Thanksgiving dinners instead of roasted turkey. Some people eat vegetarian turkey, which is made out of tofu. Others prefer to eat just the garden side dishes like squash, salads, or fruit. Whatever type of Thanksgiving meal you prefer, you really can't go wrong. It's bound to be delicious, no matter what!

Speaking of turkeys, some families include breaking the turkey's wishbone as part of their Thanksgiving tradition. After the meat has been eaten or otherwise removed, the wishbone is exposed. When it has had a little time to become dry and brittle, two people each take one end of the bone and pull it apart while making a wish. Whoever ends up with the larger part of the bone is supposed to get their wish.

You've probably heard of this last tradition. Every year, the President of the United States receives a gift of a live turkey. He actually receives two, in case something happens to the official turkey. At a White House ceremony, the President "pardons" the National Thanksgiving Turkey and any alternate turkeys, allowing them to live out the rest of their lives on a farm. The turkeys are probably very grateful for that.

After dinner, a lot of families will take part in some additional activities. Some take group walks to help work off the meal, while some nap. Still others play board or card

games, watch a holiday film together, or begin decorating for the yuletide season.

Yes, every family has its own traditions. They can be typical or unique, and they're all special. But the one tradition we all share this time of year is being thankful for all that we have.

### **Teacher Resources – Vocabulary**

*Potential Words for Further Study:* These words not only help with comprehension of the passage, they also appear more frequently in a wide spectrum of reading, especially in academic text. Therefore, further study of the meaning of these words may be beneficial. The words on this list can be incorporated into subsequent lessons.

evolve (v) to develop by gradual changes; unfold

tradition (n) a custom or belief that has existed for a long time

unique (adj) one and only; single; sole

widespread (adj) distributed, circulated, or occurring over a wide area or extent

*Words for Quick Discussion:* These words may need to be discussed with students as they are encountered, to help with comprehension of the passage. It is best to do this with a quick discussion while reading the text, in student-friendly language.

brittle (adj) easily cracked, snapped, or broken; fragile

pardon (v) release from punishment for an offense

tofu (n) a soft white or brown food made from soybeans

vegetarian (adj) someone who never eats meat or fish

yuletide (n) the period of several days around and including Christmas Day

**Definition Source:** Collins English Dictionary. Retrieved from <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>

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