

Freedom's Feast THANKSGIVING

Ceremonies to get the most out of your THANKSGIVING celebration.



Host: Today, Americans everywhere are celebrating our country's most popular holiday. However we choose to gather-with family or with friends' groups-we are all united in our desire to connect with those we love. We are grateful for family, friends, and the food we enjoy. We are also thankful to be Americans.

Reader: Some of us are here because our ancestors fled oppression. Others came with dreams of a better life. Some came against their will as slaves. Others were here for thousands of years and helped or fought the newcomers to their native land.

Reader: No matter how we got here, we are all the beneficiaries of our founders' belief in our right to be free. They risked their lives so that they and future generations could live in freedom. It is our job to make sure that this right belongs to all Americans and to teach our children to protect it.

Host: ask participants to share why they are thankful for America, to name freedoms they care about or to sing: 'My Country 'Tis of Thee' (1st stanza—of the four stanza song—in margin to left).

Reader: Without native American help, many early settlers coming to the "new world" would have died. They were unprepared for the hardships of pioneer life. While nearly half of the original Plymouth landing party died that first winter, Native Americans suffered *far* greater losses as the land was settled. And yet, over the next century and a half, the determination of thousands became the dream of millions.

Reader: Most nations cannot claim a specific birthday. The United States can. Abraham Lincoln in his famous Gettysburg address of 1863 put it this way:

ALL: "Fourscore and seven years ago, our forefathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Reader: President Lincoln was referring to the **Declaration of Independence** adopted on July 4, 1776 at the Continental Congress. The 56 men who signed it knew that they were committing an act of treason punishable by death.

Reader: Thomas Jefferson was the primary author of this revolutionary document. Its principles guide our ideas about government and hopes for our nation to this day.

Reader: **"We hold these truths to be self-evident:**

Reader: **that all men are created equal**

Reader: **that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights**

Reader: **that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.**

Reader: **That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...**

Reader: **it is the Right of the People to...institute new Government...**

Reader: **And for the support of this Declaration**

Reader: **with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence**

ALL: we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

NOW MORE THAN EVER....

PLEASE CONTRIBUTE TO YOUR LOCAL FOOD BANK. 48 MILLION AMERICANS FACE HUNGER INCLUDING 14 MILLION CHILDREN. EVERY COUNTY IN OUR COUNTRY HAS MEMBERS WHO EXPERIENCE HUNGER OR FOOD INSECURITY.
feedingamerica.org

*In future days we look forward to a world founded upon four **essential freedoms**—freedom of speech, of worship, from material want, and from fear.*
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, STATE OF THE UNION 1941

MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE

My country 'tis of thee
Sweet land of Liberty
Of thee I sing:
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside,
Let freedom ring!

***Samuel Francis Smith** wrote this patriotic song at the request of his friend, Lowell Mason. Set to Smith's chosen melody from Muzio Clementi's Symphony No. 3, it was first performed July 4, 1831 and published in 1832.*

*Visit **here** for an Abolitionist version of this song.*

What do you think life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness meant in 1776? What do you think it means today?

The first Thanksgiving celebration was a harvest feast shared by the Plymouth pilgrims and the Wampanoag tribe in 1621 over three days.

Where there is no struggle, there is no strength.
OPRAH WINFREY

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Reader: With independence comes responsibility. After nine months of fierce debate, the **Constitution** was ratified on June 21, 1788. It tells us how the founders wanted our new nation to be governed and how future generations could adapt the original laws for changing times.

Reader: It distributes the powers of government across three branches:the legislative (Congress) the executive (the President and the cabinet), and the judicial (the courts). This system helps to ensure that all opinions are heard in a national debate. It is also designed to prevent any one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

ALL: **"We the People of the United States**

ALL: **in order to form a more perfect union,**

ALL: **establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defense,**

ALL: **promote the general Welfare, and secure the blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity,**

ALL: **do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."**

ALL: **"PROCLAIM FREEDOM THROUGHOUT THE LAND UNTO ALL THE INHABITANTS THEREOF."***

Reader: The Second Continental Congress passed ten amendments to the Constitution on December 15, 1791 called **The Bill of Rights.** It protects individual and states' rights from federal government intrusion. The best known amendment may well be the first:

ALL: **"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."**

Host: Seventeen more constitutional amendments have been added since 1791. They reflect the will of the majority of the people. America remains vibrant as long as everyone obeys the law—or chooses to properly challenge it. This is our strength.

Reader: We give thanks that despite all of the challenges we face, we gather this Thanksgiving to celebrate the very freedoms and responsibility the holiday represents.

Reader: We give thanks that even though key rights are under assault, so many Americans continue to protest peacefully, speak openly, and judge fairly.

Reader: We give thanks for the right to vote so that each one of us has a voice in America.

Host: On this day of Thanksgiving, we thank those who founded our country and left a permanent legacy that continues to guide and inspire us.



ALL: **We give thanks for the blessings in our lives and for the privilege of being Americans.**

Sing God Bless America (or another song of your choice) Say a blessing from your faith tradition (if applicable). Enjoy your meal and your Thanksgiving!

Be curious. Be kind. Be civil. Be safe.

See **www.freedomsfeast.us/Thanksgiving** *for other Thanksgiving Resources. Share your experience with us on Instagram!*

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1775 DEMOGRAPHICS

Number of colonies: 13

Total population: 2.5 million

Slave population: 20% of all Americans 50% of all virginians 67% of all south Carolinians

Native Americans (pre-Columbian): 1000+ civilizations 300 languages population estimate: 18 million

Native Americans today: 574 tribes 175 languages 2021 census population- 8.75 million

US foreign born population: 1850: 2.2 million; 1900: 10.4 million; 2021: 45.2 million

**This quote from Leviticus 25:10 was inscribed on the State House bell in Philadelphia in 1752. It became an icon when abolitionists renamed it the Liberty Bell in 1837.*

President Washington declared the first national "Thanksgiving Day"on November 26, 1789 to give thanks for the Constitution. President Lincoln made it an annual holiday by presidential proclamation on October 3, 1863 as a day "set apart" for gratitude and national healing. Beginning in 1837, Sarah Josepha Hale waged a 38 year campaign to make Thanksgiving a permanent national holiday to bring families and our nation together. That finally happened in 1941.

What constitutional rights do you think are at risk today? What can we do about it?

GOD BLESS AMERICA

God bless America,
land that I love. Stand beside her and guide her
Through the night with the light from above.
From the mountains to the prairies,
To the ocean white with foam
God bless America, My home sweet home. God bless America, My home sweet home.

Irving Berlin wrote "God Bless America" in 1938 for Kate Smith to sing on her regular radio show. First broadcast November 11, 1938, "God Bless America" quickly became her signature song and one of America's most loved patriotic songs.